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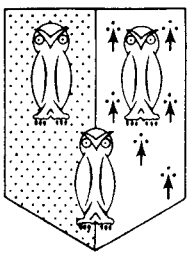

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NEH News

1977-78 FELLOWSHIPS IN RESIDENCE FOR COLLEGE TEACHERS

The National Endowment for the Humanities has announced that its program of Fellowships in Residence for College Teachers will offer sixteen seminars during the full academic year of 1977-78. These seminars will cover the different disciplines of the humanities and the humanistic social sciences, and will be located at universities throughout the country. Between six and twelve college teachers will be selected to attend each seminar. The maximum stipend for Fellows is $14,500 plus a moving and travel allowance of $500 for those who are not commuting from their own homes.

Information about the seminar topics, directors, and locations for 1977-78 will be available upon request after September 1, 1976, from the Division of Fellowships, National Endowment for the Humanities, 806 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506. The deadline for submission of applications will be November 8, 1976.

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NOTES

"Destructive Gemeinschaft" is based on ideas from **RICHARD SENNETT**'s new book, *The Fall of Public Man,* to be published this winter by Knopf. . . . **MARTINE DE COURCEL** graduated in psychology from the Sorbonne. She lives in Paris. . . . **WILLIAM BARRETT** is currently at work on a book on twentieth-century philosophy which will be published this coming year. He is a professor of philosophy at New York University. . . . *Jaguar Skies* is the title of **MICHAEL McCLURE**'s latest collection of poetry, published by New Directions. . . . **DAVID SHAPIRO**'s *A Man Holding an Acoustic Panel,* was nominated for a National Book Award. His next book, *Lateness,* will be published by Overlook Press—Viking. . . . "Love and Marilyn Monroe" will appear in *Kilroy's Carnival: Last and Lost Poems of Delmore Schwartz,* edited by Robert Phillips and published by New Directions. . . . **ANN LAUTERBACH** lives in New York and is director of the Max Protech art gallery. . . . **ANNE WALDMAN** is currently teaching at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. . . . **LEON STOKESBURY** is a graduate student at the University of Texas. His first book of poems, *Often in a Different Landscape,* will be published in October by The University of Texas Press. . . . *Moscow Mansions* is the title of the most recent collection of poems by **BARBARA GUEST**. . . . The latest projects of **XAVER KROETZ** are a collection of plays and a book on East Germany. He lives outside of Munich. . . . **MICHAEL ROLOFF** tells us he is fully occupied in the running of a newly founded firm, Urizen Books, Inc., whose first books will appear this fall. . . . Also this fall, Little, Brown & Co. will publish **LEO BERSANI**'s new book, *A Future for Astyanax/Character and Desire in Literature.* Mr. Bersani lives in California and is chairman of the French department at U.C., Berkeley. . . . **MOLLIE HORWITZ** is a free-lance writer and translator currently writing a book on French intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War. . . . **ELIZABETH DALTON** is in the English department at Barnard College, where she teaches a course in literature and psychoanalysis. . . . Among the most recently published books of **DAVID CAUTE** are *The Fellow-Travellers* and *Cuba, Yes?* He has just completed a long study of the postwar anti-Communist purge in America, *The Great Fear,* to be published next year by Simon and Schuster. . . . **ALAN HELMS** is hard at work on a screenplay which he hopes to have finished by early spring. He teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. . . . **PHILIP STEVICK** lives in "an old house in Bucks County" and has recently published essays on contemporary fiction.

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POINTS AFTER . . .

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIFTIES

Revisionist history, with its one-sided politics and simplified morality, must make the complexities of the past more palatable. How else to explain the recent popularity of revisionism? In any case, I find it a little burdensome and saddening to have to go back to the McCarthy era to try to get the record straight. It was one of the most stupid and shameful periods, and its lessons have been made clear in countless books and articles, though its political meaning is apparently still not clear.

The occasion for these reluctant reflections is Lillian Hellman's book, *Scoundrel Time,* in which she makes some statements about the role of *Partisan Review* and some of its contributors in relation to McCarthy. Miss Hellman is an honorable and gifted woman, and a friend, but I think a few of her facts and political conclusions need to be corrected. It may appear pompous to speak of the historic record, but it seems to me that those of us who have committed a good part of our lives and our thinking to the intellectual and political issues of our time have an obligation to put down the facts as objectively as we can and to try to explain events in which we had some part in a way that might make sense for the future.

As we know, Miss Hellman was a victim of McCarthy's psychopathic and politically opportunistic campaign against Communists, fellow travellers, and a number of innocent people who were either caught in the crossfire or who were simply falsely accused. In her book, Miss Hellman asks bitterly why high-minded anti-Communists did not come to her or to Dashiell Hammett's defense, and goes on to suggest that such anti-Communists bear some responsibility for Nixon, Watergate, and Vietnam. "There were many thoughtful and distinguished men and women on both magazines" she says, referring to *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*. "None of them, so far as I know, has yet found it a part of conscience to admit that their cold war anti-Communism was perverted, possibly against their wishes, into the Vietnam War and then into the reign of Nixon, their unwanted but inevitable leader." And of *Partisan Review,* Miss Hellman also says "Although

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through the years it has published many pieces protesting the punishment of dissidents in Eastern Europe, it made no protest when people in this country were jailed or ruined. In fact, it took no editorial position against McCarthy himself although it did publish the results of anti-McCarthy symposiums and at least one distinguished piece by Irving Howe."

Now, there are a number of different facts, observations, questions, political biases all lumped together in these statements. First, as to the facts: *Partisan Review* printed only two editorials during this period, and one was a reply to James Burnham's letter of resignation from the advisory board because of the magazine's anti-McCarthy policies. Burnham claimed he was neutral on the question of McCarthy, and the editors replied that one could not be neutral in this respect. In addition, besides the essay by Irving Howe, which was mostly against the intellectual drift to the right, there were anti-McCarthy statements by Richard Rovere, Arthur Schlesinger, Dwight Macdonald, and Philip Rahv. There were also several pieces critical of the new conservatism by myself.

Furthermore, though I have claimed no special credit for it, I, too, was harassed by the FBI and was pressured before a grand jury to give names. I had not been a member of the Communist party but had been secretary of the John Reed Writers Club. Nor did I get any publicity for my stand, since I was not a Hollywood celebrity. Miss Hellman speaks of the loss of lucrative jobs by the Hollywood ten and others. Again, though it was not publicized, I and other writers who had broken with the Communists were kept from writing for various journals and prevented from getting not-so-lucrative university jobs because of the pressure and machinations of the Communists.

Lillian Hellman's question as to why we did not come to the defense of those who had been attacked by McCarthy is not as simple as it appears. First of all, some were Communists and what one was asked to defend was their right to lie about it. My own code was to tell the truth about myself, regardless of the consequences. Another consideration was the feeling, which I am sure was shared by others, that Communists did not have a divine right to a job in the government or in Hollywood—any more than I felt I had a right to a high-salaried job in an institution I believed to be an instrument of capitalist power and exploitation. I do not recall, for example, any instance of Lenin's, or Trotsky's, or Rosa Luxembourg's demanding that they be employed by the institutions of the enemy. Frankly, too, I could not take seriously those Communists and fellow-traveling celebrities who were playing with revolution, for it did not seem to occur to them that being for a revolution might have consequences. Furthermore, it was not just a case of disagreeing with the Communists. They had branded us as the enemy. They were under orders not to speak to us. Their press called us every dirty name

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in and out of the political lexicon. And, of course, they were the apologists for the arrest and torture of countless dissident writers in the Soviet Union and in other Communist countries.

I suppose if we were the ideal, selfless human beings we sometimes pretended to be, we would have transcended all these factors and come to the defense of peoople we thought to be the instruments, whether conscious or not, of a new barbarism.

In any case, how could Lillian Hellman not know these things? And just as she asks how we could not come to the defense of McCarthy's victims, one could ask her how she could not come to the defense of all those who had been killed or defamed by the Communists? How could she still be silent about the persecution of writers in Russia? Why has she not spoken up against Russian anti-Semitism or the lies about Israel?

Perhaps one explanation for Lillian Hellman's attitude is that she does not distinguish sufficiently between the anti-Communism of the Right and the anti-Communism of the Left. I, myself, do not believe that even the conservative intellectuals were responsible for Watergate. That is too simple a reading of the forces behind these macabre phenomena. But, clearly, those anti-Communists who were socialists or liberals and who have been at least as critical of our own society as they have been of Russia have no more to do with Nixon than with McCarthy. And one should reasonably expect that someone as honest and talented as Miss Hellman would have identified herself with those writers who do not selectively protest against oppression and injustice.

Miss Hellman speaks at one point of writers who have not "stepped forward to admit a mistake, even now," and she says of herself that she "took too long to see what was going on in the Soviet Union." Of course, most people find it easier to admit other people's mistakes; and admitting a mistake is sometimes a substitute for correcting it. But the fact is that it has been very difficult to maintain one's political balance in these chaotic times that constantly wipe out traditional standards of behavior. And it is only fair that if I point out what I think to be Lillian Hellman's errors that I confess a few of my own. As I look back to the thirties, when many of us were born politically, it seems clear that my own swings, though they seemed to correspond to the political needs of the time, tended to be too extreme. At first, I was taken in if only for a short period, by the Communists. Then my anti-Communist reaction probably carried me a little too far in the other direction despite the fact that I still considered myself a radical. Then in the sixties, though I was critical of the New Left, I could be said to have been too tolerant of its half-baked politics. Perhaps we cannot avoid such excesses, but if we are to be saved from the extremes that have seduced so many

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intellectuals, it seems to me it can only be by preserving a critical attitude toward all ideologies and power structures, and toward all organized rhetorics of salvation. What went wrong—for the apologists of the right and the left—was to permit one lie to be substituted for another.

A note about the Introduction: I do not understand what Gary Wills's essay was supposed to add. Far below the level of his earlier writing, it can be described only as an unfortunate example of pop revisionist history. Everything is reduced to a medieval morality play in which progress is dressed up as a Communist, and reaction as an anti-Communist. Thus the cold war, says Wills, was started by Truman as a piece of campaign strategy. And he makes some mocking remarks about Mary McCarthy's and Dwight Macdonald's devotion to liberty, because of their opposition to the Waldorf Conference, which was organized by the Communists. There is something anachronistic about all this, coming at a time when even the Communists, particularly in Europe, may be trying to free themselves from the old sectarian thinking.

W.P.

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Richard Sennett

DESTRUCTIVE GEMEINSCHAFT

Every generation engages in a life-long struggle with what it first believed. Sometimes people repudiate early ideals, but their temperament remains unchanged, as, for example, those rigid Stalinists who have become fiercely anti-Marxist. In other generations, like our own, the first truths are not challenged explicitly, rather they are affirmed with a voice that grows ever more tired, weak, and resigned.

The truth to which our generation assents is that psychological self-exposure is a moral good. In this view it is better to show your feelings to another person, no matter how wounding the feelings are, than to suppress or disguise what you feel. A person is not being authentic with you unless he or she is willing to share his or her secrets. This compulsion to expose the self shows up in many different ways: it is the rationale of the feeling-industry, from Esalen to rolfing to encounter weekends at hotels in the Catskills. It is the rationale of the modern biography or autobiography, in which exposure of the subject's intimate affairs is presumed to have an important bearing on how he painted or wrote. It is the rationale also of our political imagination: a politician's "credibility" is measured not so much in terms of his past performance as through a reading of what sort of personality he "projects."

But it is in an increasingly passive spirit that we take self-disclosure to be a moral good; this passivity is forced upon us by the very nature of our belief. An existence of unrelieved confession, openness, and revelation of inner secrets would be absolute hell. It is by no accident that encounter groups are pleasurable only as weekend affairs at hotels, nor that in marriages sustained confrontation leads so often to divorce, nor that the political imagination searches only for glimpses of the man behind the legislator to measure the credibility of the legislator at work. If in general people can bear only so much truth, it would seem that they have an especially limited tolerance when it comes to sustained awareness of the maelstrom of envy, kindness, rapacious desire, and gentleness of which the human psyche is

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composed. Most societies confine this chaos in public forms like religious rituals or acts of obedience to secular ideology, which offer alternative modes of expression to the display of raw psychic energy. When a culture moralizes the very existence of this energy, it ensures that its experience of the moral life will occur only in fits and starts. The weight of circumstance, of getting from day to day, will make the moments of self-exposure sudden upheavals beneath the surface of everyday order. The upheaval people do not so much greet with demonic glee as humbly accept, for when you are under the whip of primal passion you are forced into heresy for real.

It is true that a life of constant psychic disguise would be as intolerable as a life of constant self-revelation. All cultures arrange some rhythm of alternation between the two; the question is how people feel the rhythm: do they believe there is equal value in moments of disguise and revelation, or are people unmoved by the virtues of conventional, ritual behavior and aroused only when self-display occurs? This question of the value placed on self-revelation is a social and historical question; the seriousness with which people take their psyches depends on the culture in which they live. It is important to keep these dimensions of the question in mind, for all too often the critics of authenticity, after paying lip service to the conditions of advanced capitalism and of secularism which have led people to be so concerned with their private feelings, cast aside the social considerations and criticize authenticity as an abstract psychological condition. Instead of being regarded as a product of a deformed culture, the desire for authenticity comes to be seen as a sign of the innate sinfulness of human nature. This is the failing of Theodor Adorno's *The Language of Authenticity,* for example. His critique of authenticity soon puts the reader on familiar conservative terrain; the impulse life of man comes to be equated per se with the destructiveness of self-revelation; therefore social repression per se becomes a moral good. One of the great virtues of Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity,* which is conservatism of an altogether different and more noble kind, is to show how the morality of authenticity is ineluctably the product of historical changes in modern culture. Moreover, Trilling has shown how the emphasis on self-revelation which erupted in the last decade is not a freak condition whose origins lie simply in the war between the generations in the late 1960s; this self-absorption is the result of hidden changes in modern culture in the making since the French Revolution.

Self-revelation is also social, rather than an abstract psychological, preoccupation, for the attitudes people have about their own emotions they tend to project on others. People feel close, and their relationship seems real, if they show themselves to each other; by contrast, it is hard for us to imagine that people determined to hold things back in each other's presence

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can have much of a relationship. An authentic social relationship must thus progress through mutual self-revelation; inauthenticity in social relationships is identified with what used to be called discretion. The ideal, authentic social bond is today alluded to in many familiar code words that posit a society in which people are "open" to each other, "responsive to each other's needs," ready to "interact freely." All of these code words convert social relationships into psychological transactions; the model underlying all of them is a bizarre form of canasta in which each of the players competes to show the others the cards of identity he holds.

There is a technical sociological word whose changing meaning captures this conversion of social relations into psychological terms: it is *Gemeinschaft.* The sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies at the end of the nineteenth century used the word to mean full and open emotional relations with others. In opposing *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* he wanted to create an historical, rather than a purely analytic contrast. *Gemeinschaft* relations existed in the precapitalist, preurbanized world of the *ancien régime; gesellschaft* relations, in which people split up their emotions according to the principle of the division of labor, Tönnies depicted as characteristic of the modern world. Much as he mourned the loss of *gemeinschaft* relations, he never thought they could be revived, for that would mean reviving the hierarchic, personalistic world of the *ancien régime.* The longing for *Gemeinschaft* he in fact criticized as "displaced pastoralism."

Today, *Gemeinschaft* has been redefined, shorn of the historical meaning Tönnies gave it, and converted into a moral absolute—a condition of authenticity, of good faith. The celebration of *Gemeinschaft* as a pure state is captured in the ordinary English translation of the word: community. When people are open with each other and expose their feelings to each other, they create a community. An encounter group is the most obvious example of a community conducted on psychological principles of openness, but these principles enter into ideas about other kinds of communities as well. In the debates about centralization and decentralization in urban planning, for instance, the proponents of decentralization often argue that local communities should take precedence over the needs of the city as a whole, because in the local community people have real human relationships, in which they can be open with each other, get to know each other, and share their feelings, while strangers in the city at large don't. And this notion of community is connected with disclosure: thus, in the literature on the family as a community, full interaction is often presented as an optimum condition, and the insistence on one's right to keep things back from those one loves is seen as a form of bad faith which threatens the family as a whole.

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Needless to say, the authentic interchange, the authenticity event, is only infrequently experienced. Local communities do have occasional flashes of this feeling of people really sharing with each other—usually during periods of crisis when the community is threatened from outside. But micro-communities (and these would include the family) can bear moments of mutual self-disclosure only as periodic upheavals below the surface of day-to-day order. Yet no matter how infrequently we can actually experience *Gemeinschaft,* we persistently seek it out, measuring real social relations by this ideal which can be sustained only in imagination. What I want to show here is why the very idea of self-disclosure, the authenticity event, the open community, is destructive. This ideal makes our real social relations seem sterile, and often poisons human relationships by creating a sense of crisis which can be resolved only if the persons involved abandon each other. My critique does not assert that *Gemeinschaft* is destructive per se, but attempts to indicate why changes in modern society have made it so. These changes involve the redefinition of nineteenth-century eroticism into twentieth-century sexuality, and the transformation of privacy as it was understood in the last century into a new idea of intimacy.

EROTICISM TRANSFORMED INTO SEXUALITY

When we think of our great-grandparents' experiences of physical love, we are most likely to think about the inhibitions and repressions. Victorian bourgeois prudery was so extreme it occasionally acquired an almost surreal quality; a common practice, for instance, was to cover the legs of grand pianos with leggings, because a bare leg as such was thought "provocative." This prudery lay at the root of a number of psychopathologies especially acute at the time—not only hysterias, but also what the Victorians called "complaints," which among women were manifested by such symptoms as uncontrollable vomiting at the sight of menstrual blood and among men by such symptoms as acute attacks of anxiety after the discovery of an ejaculation occurring during sleep. Certainly no one today could possibly hope for a return to such repression. Yet it is important to see the rationale behind this sexual repression and even to comprehend a certain dignity among bourgeois men and women in these Puritanical struggles with themselves. A code of eroticism ruled nineteenth-century bourgeois consciousness, an eroticism composed of three elements.

The first of these elements was the belief that states of feeling and signs of character manifest themselves involuntarily. Hence, what is deeply felt or deeply rooted in character is beyond the power of the will to shape or hide: emotion appears unbidden, and at moments of vulnerability emotion

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is a betrayal. The involuntary expression of emotion received its greatest theoretical elaboration in Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotion in Animals and Man*. Darwin connected the involuntary betrayal of emotion with the necessities of biology which ruled the human organism. But the same idea had more popular expressions which sought to indicate ways of detecting transitory states of feeling. Thus, depression was supposed to reveal itself by involuntary tension in the cheeks, an episode of masturbation by the sudden growth of a spot of hair on the palms.

Similarly, character traits were to be read through details of appearance. The involuntary expression of character involved a particular system of cognition, as in the practice of phrenology and Bertillion measurement: the shape of the skull, hand, or foot supposedly revealing the presence of certain characterological traits which the criminal, defective, or salacious person could do nothing to disguise. The Bertillion measures of criminality concern millimeters of difference between the cranial shape of the criminal and the law-abider. Because these involuntary clues of personality were like cameos, personality itself was felt to be so difficult to control; one might control most of one's behavior and still some little thing would give one away.

In such a culture, anxiety about sexual matters formed part of a larger belief that the expression of all feeling escaped control by the ego. One's only defenses were either to shield oneself as completely as possible, to neutralize one's appearance, as the Victorians did through their clothing, or to attempt to repress feeling itself. For if a transitory emotion is uncontrollably manifest through the most minute clues, one can be secure only if one tries to stop feeling in the first place. Shielding and denial, then, are logical consequences of believing in the *immanence* of the personality; the line between inside and outside is dissolved.

This Victorian belief led to a fetishism of appearances. I use this term more in a Marxian than a Freudian sense, to indicate how the trivia of appearance could be believed to be signs of a whole human being. If the self speaks through minutiae of appearance, then every appearance must be a guide to some characterological state. Thus, it becomes logical to cover the legs of a piano with skirts, because an exposed leg is the sign of lewdness. In the clothing of the Victorian era, this fetishism of appearances was especially strong. A gentleman wearing a drab black broadcloth coat could be distinguished from an ordinary bourgeois wearing a similar garment because the buttons on the gentleman's sleeve could actually button and unbutton. For men this fetishism centered around questions of class; for women it centered around sexual propriety. The differences between the dress of "loose" women and the proper ladies who appeared in *Le Moniteur de la Mode* lay in minor distinctions in the use of color for shawls and hoods, or

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the length or shortness of gloves. Minute differences between objects speak of vast differences in feeling between those who wear them.

In the sections of the first volume of *Das Capital* where Marx takes up the subject of fetishized objects, he explains them as a veil modern capitalism draws over production relations, so that the inequities of production, which might be visible if goods were conceived of simply in terms of use, are obscured; these objects seem instead to contain mysterious and enticing psychological qualities. Missing in his analysis, however, is a consideration of the psychological consequences of becoming mystified, of believing in the minutiae of man-made things as personality omens, for the person so mystified. The Victorian bourgeoisie was more than a class laboring under an illusion; it was also a class trying to make sense of its daily experience on the basis of this illusion. People scanned the public world for signs of the private life of others at the same time that each attempted to shield himself from being so read. This double process of searching and shielding was hardly a simple state of equilibrium or a matter of balance between public and private.

Sexual relations in a world conceived in such terms had of necessity to be social relations. Today, having an affair with another person would not be likely to cause someone to call into question his or her capacities as a parent, or—if it were someone sufficiently "liberated"—his or her capacities as husband or wife. For the Victorian bourgeoisie, those connections had to be made. If every act, every feeling, counts in terms of defining the whole person, then emotional experience in one domain carries unavoidable implications about the character of the person acting in another. A violation of morality in one sphere signifies a moral violation in every other; an adulteress cannot be a loving mother, she has betrayed her children in taking a lover, and so on. Again, I wish to call attention not so much to how brutal this repressive code could be as to the premise which produced the repression. The immanence of character in all appearances forced the Victorian to weigh each experience in relation to other experiences to us seemingly quite dissociated. For all the desire to flee the world at large and hide in privatized, isolated places, the Victorians had to measure the acts of the private sphere on the basis of their public implications. This is how a system of social relations was produced.

People so concerned with the involuntary expression of feelings, with fetishized objects, each of which contains clues to the personality of its wearer or owner, people who conceived of their sexual relations as having repercussions beyond the bedroom door; these people inhabited an erotic world. It was a sensual world, but overwhelmingly, uncontrollably so, and

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as a consequence it prompted attempts at repression and self-discipline which were in fact of the most destructive sort. Eroticism and repression: these two psychological phenomena dominated the capitalist bourgeoisie in its first epoch of domination in Western society.

What has occurred in the present century is that we have overturned the eroticism of that world, hoping to escape from its repressiveness, in such a way that we have substituted a new slavery for the old. We have desocialized physical love, turning eroticism into the more isolated and inward terms of sexuality. But this change is not so much a contrast as it is a form of continuity with the Victorian situation. The desocializing of physical love which has taken place in the present century is a result of carrying to an extreme the Victorian's first principle, the principle of personality immanent in appearances.

Now it is a truism that Americans and American culture tend to be personalistic in their view of social relations. Aspects of class, race, and history are easily abandoned in favor of explanations of events which center on the character and motivation of the participants involved. But the American viewpoint represents a psychological vision of society which is taking hold in Western Europe in the present century as well. Think, for instance, of how Left leaders in England, France, and West Germany are spoken of as "legitimate" or "credible." Such judgments are based not so much on the leader's ideological purity or coherence as on his ability to appeal personally and so to command the votes of those who do not share his left-wing ideas. Or think of the increasing tendency of people in the upper working classes and the new *classes moyennes* to view their positions in society as simply the result (or failure) of their personal abilities. This personalizing of class occurs even though people may understand in the abstract that their positions result from the blind workings of advanced capitalism.

To view one's experience in the world as a consequence or mirror of one's personality is narcissism. By this is not meant love of self, but more precisely the tendency to regard the world as a mirror of self. When personality is believed to be causally at work in all human experiences, the world will soon seem to be only a mirror of the self. At this point, the idea of *Gemeinschaft* acquires its absolutist, moralistic form: if people are not revealing their inner feelings to others, they are not being "for real." As the principle of immanent personality appearing in the nineteenth century has expanded its hold upon people's minds to such an extent that all appearances in society seem real only as manifestations of personality and personal feelings, narcissism has been mobilized as a cultural condition. Narcissism has become the norm, the code of meaning.

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As we know, the psychological disorders which psychotherapists treated most often eighty years ago were hysterias. But today hysteria is a relatively rare complaint. Instead, what appears most commonly in clinics for treatment are "character disorders." The patient feels empty, dead, or dissociated from the people around him, but has no objectified neurotic signs such as an hysteria or a phobia. One has this feeling of deadness, of an inability to feel or to relate to other people, precisely because one has begun to conceive of that outside world as a peculiar mirror of self. It exists to fulfill the self; there are no "human objects" or object relations with a reality all their own. The peculiarity and the destructiveness of this narcissistic vision is that the environment of the human being becomes less fulfilling the more it is judged in terms of its congruence with or subservience to self needs. Expectations of the outside grow enormous. It is a sea in which the self floats without differentiation; and for the very reason that expectation of fulfillment becomes at once so vast, and so amorphous, the possibilities of fulfillment are diminished. Because there are no boundaries between self and other, experiences lose their form; they never seem to have an end or a definition of completion. Concrete experience with other people therefore never seems "enough." And because gratification from this oceanic, boundaryless outside never seems enough, the self feels empty and dead. The obvious content of a character disorder is, "I am not feeling"; the hidden narcissistic content is, "the world is failing me, and so I am not feeling."

This shift in clinical data from Freud's generation to the present has occurred because the society has changed. It is a society which has orchestrated the energies of narcissism around the theme of emotional "liberation." This new music drowns out the very idea of society itself. By "society" I mean a situation in which people weigh different domains of experience against one another so that choices are made, and people sacrifice one set of gratifications for the sake of another. Moreover, "society" involves the operation of external, believable constraints upon the self (like class consciousness, religious commitment, manners or rituals of kindness) having a reality of their own.

Let me give an example of how this mobilization of narcissism operates in one of the popular ideologies of sexual liberation. In Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* one is presented with a clear and incontestable picture of the domination of men over women in jobs, education, homelife, etc. Then one is told that this situation obtains because a social "system" operates in society: men aren't tyrants, modern life simply makes them play that role. Well and good. The next step in the argument is the assertion that a woman has to rebel against this system by being able to do anything a man

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does; she "deserves" whatever men have. The author argues that women should try to get "total gratification," that they deserve whatever they desire. As the book unfolds, the idea recedes that a system of bad social relations created female oppression in the first place. A woman who gets what she "deserves" in the system simply changes positions in the game of musical chairs. Thus, in the course of making an argument for the equality of the sexes, Greer winds up forgetting about society. Total gratification of the self becomes the alternative to systematic discrimination against females. The world, at first seen as socially unjust, becomes a mirror or resource for the self. This is the unfolding of narcissism at work in an ideology of liberation, and it defeats goals of that ideology by gradually blotting out the reality which caused the problem. The conversion of the desire for social liberation into the desire for personal liberation maintains the system as a whole; the social network of inequalities is not challenged, although the sex of a few of the players may be changed.

But what is truly perverse about narcissistic projections is that they are seldom self-evident; nor are they simple demands for pleasure. For example, one attempts to explain to himself why he has failed to be upwardly mobile, and arrives at the conclusion—despite all his abstract knowledge that social organization controls his chances—that some personal failing is the cause. In this he is mirroring the self onto the world. This is as much a narcissistic formulation as is the credo that in the end liberation from a subdominant role involves free gratification of the self through use of the "resources" of society.

Elsewhere I have argued that there is a correlation between the increasing bureaucratization of modern capitalism and the mobilization of narcissism in society. Large-scale bureaucratic structures function according to a system of promised rewards based on the supposed talent, personal affability, and moral character of the employee at work. Reward thus becomes tied to the exercise of personal ability, and the failure to receive reward—in fact a systematic necessity since large bureaucracies are sharp pyramids—is increasingly interpreted by those in the lower middle positions as a failure on their own parts to be rewardable, by virtue of their personalities. Thus, it is also for functional reasons, and not only as a consequence of the intensified belief in personality manifest in all social relations, that narcissism has come increasingly to be mobilized.

When bureaucracy and the collective consciousness of personality join forces, it becomes possible to believe, as the Victorian bourgeoisie could not, in a protean self. The American psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton defines a protean self as a conception of identity involving the belief that one's personality

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is always undergoing fundamental changes, or is capable of doing so. There is consequently no core of "innate" human nature or of fixed social conditions which define it: it is a self so totally immanent in the world that it is a product of immediate appearances and of sensations. This notion of selfhood puts an immense premium on "direct" experiences with other people; it detests reserve or masks behind which other people are felt to lurk, because in being distant they seem to be inauthentic, failing to take the immediate moment of human contact as an absolute. About this protean self, Lifton is highly ambivalent. He sees its value, as a pure analytic construct, because the vision of an infinitely malleable human nature does away with the whole problem of ahistorical, innate personality factors; but he fears this protean man somewhat as a cultural phenomenon. For if one dedicates oneself so thoroughly to a life of direct sensate experience, one cannot make long-term commitments, and resistance to immediate moments which are malign or unjust becomes difficult. A protean man may live a rich immediate life, but only at the cost of accommodation to his environment. By contrast, the person who feels his selfhood to be constant has acquired the will to resist his environment.

Belief in a protean self follows logically from a loss of boundaries around the self. If the world of impersonal necessity is erased, and reality becomes a matter of feeling, then changes in feeling, transitory impressions and sensations come to seem like fundamental changes in character. The self-concept as a whole is thus fetishized, just as individual objects were a century ago.

This totally phenomenological view of the self achieved one of its most dramatic expressions in the commune movements of North America and Western Europe during the last decade. These communes were seen less as arrangements valuable or pleasurable in themselves than as models of how the larger society ought to reform itself. Indeed, the millenarian commune involves a conviction that changes in one's immediate life space are so important and changes in the quality of feelings between people who become intimate are of such value, that these changes somehow become emblems of what the whole of society ought to be like. Thus, there is no vision of the operation of society as something different from intimate transactions. But it is possible to believe that changes in one's immediate feelings are political in character only if one assumes that the whole of society is made up of creatures defined essentially by their immediate feelings. And if one accepts such an assumption, then it is logical to believe that this society of protean selves is waiting for a "model" of changes in feeling to guide the transformation of the whole.

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But the "counter culture" here is only an expression of the larger ordinary culture as is evident in the realm of sexuality. In this area, belief in a protean self suggests to people that "who" they are depends on who their lovers are: love thus becomes another mirror of the self. In the last century, Lamartine could put forward as a poetic conceit the notion that "who I am depends on whom I love today," but that conceit has been transformed in this century into a commonplace. And as a result of the acceptance of this notion, sexuality has been burdened with tasks of self-definition and self-summary which are inappropriate to the physical act of making love with another person.

There are many studies of the anxiety with which people approach the matter of sexual selection of a partner, and some evidence that this anxiety has replaced the rather different anxieties of two generations ago about the experience in bed the partners might later have. If the act of lovemaking itself has lost its terror, the prior selection of partners seems to have absorbed that same terror. For all the talk in the popular media about promiscuity, there is little evidence that free-floating sexuality is on the rise. Rather the reverse; "mate-selection" (as the sociologists call it) seems to be becoming a tense process because the choosing of someone to sleep with is a reflexive act: it tells who you are. Thus, in the Van Burgh researches, for example, there appears a consistent worry about whether "this person is right for me," a worry which crowds out such questions as "is he or she attractive?" or "do I like him or her?" Once the self becomes a protean phenomenon, the reality of the other person is erased as an Other; he or she becomes another "resource" for inner development, and loving the other person for his or her differences recedes before a desire to find in that person a definition of oneself.

The belief in protean selfhood treats intimate interchanges like a market of self-revelations. You interact with others according to how much you tell them about yourself; the more confessions you have made, the more "intimate" you have become. When the partners are out of self-revelations, the relationship all too often comes to an end: there is nothing more to say. Making human contact by marketing confessions in this way easily results in boredom, or it forces people to start all over again in a relationship once they have shown themselves to each other. Thus, psychologists, for instance, usually have to start over when training as diagnostic interviewers. The tyro interviewer is convinced that to treat another human being with respect, he must match whatever is revealed to him with a similar experience of his own. This shows that he "understands," that he "sympathizes." In fact, this card game leads neither to understanding nor sympathy; if he is any

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good, the trainee starts over with the knowledge that real respect for other human beings involves a respect for human differences. Such a therapist is increasingly in a minority, however, as the marketing of self-revelation appears in encounter groups, "T" groups, and the like. The marketing of confession has also become one of the main modes of interaction through which married people experience short-term extramarital affairs, which are initiated by that classic complaint, "my spouse doesn't understand me." The market exchange of confession has a particular logic in a society ruled by the fear that one has no self until one tells another person about it: and this is the protean man's dilemma.

These are the three conditions of modern personality: it is narcissistic, protean, and marketable. Together these conditions color our imagination of social relations which are real, authentic, and moral: there is an insistence that these relations also be open—people must show themselves to each other; they must tell the truth, about themselves, and about the strengths and weaknesses they perceive in others, no matter what. Such psychological imagination of authentic social life represents a notion of *Gemeinschaft* stripped of all the historical associations Tönnies first gave the word, and converted into a moral absolute. This notion of *Gemeinschaft* is not only crude and uncivilized, but also, as a moral interpretation of human relations, as an expectation of what reality ought to be, it has enormous destructive power.

One of the destructive aspects of modern *Gemeinschaft* lies in the way it perverts the experience of conflict. It makes people see conflict as an all-or-nothing contest for personal legitimacy. If you are different from someone else, and he reacts negatively when you reveal yourself to him, the conflict appears to you to challenge the very worth of yourself. Once conflict is escalated to the point at which it becomes a question whether it is legitimate to have your own feelings, only two endings are possible: one can either try to overwhelm the other person so that he is no longer different, or one can abandon him. Either way, an ongoing human relationship is destroyed. An unavoidable difference challenges the narcissistic modality of seeing the self mirrored in the world. This mode depends on projection and the sharing of similarity. In conflict, people are faced with a problem which will not mirror each in the other, which cannot be marketed to the other. The experience of interpersonal conflict then escalates to the more

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all-encompassing question of which person, which side of the difference, should legitimately exist at all.

Just as individuals involved in such a conflict struggle over who they are rather than specifically what they want, larger groups view conflict as a form of struggle for legitimacy between collective personality types. Instead of a neighborhood, class, or ethnic group pressing for specific gains, it tries to find an "identity." It then uses this identity as a moral weapon: because the group has a collective self, it therefore deserves fulfillment; because the members of the group feel close, feel as one, their claims upon society are legitimate, no matter what the substance of the claims, or the means of their realization. An extreme example of this pattern is to be found in ethnic-terrorist groups. The fact of having discovered a common self legitimates the means of terror to preserve that end; and this is equally true at the opposite end of the political spectrum in Falangist or other modern Fascist groups. If one moves from these political extremes to more ordinary forms of conflict, the same process is at work. The locality asserts the integrity of its demands against a central planning organization not on the grounds that the actual practices of the central bureaucracy are unjust but rather on the grounds that the solidarity of the neighborhood will be destroyed. It is no accident that local politics conducted on this basis of identity-as-legitimacy so often becomes self-defeating. At the same time as the neighborhood fights the outside world for threatening its solidarity, within itself it conducts continual tests of who really belongs, who really expresses the sense and the interests of the collective whole, and this testing leads to fragmentation, intramural struggles over who is an authentic member of the group, and so on. Powerlessness comes from the very attempts to define a collective identity instead of defining the common interests of a diverse group of people. This latter idea was I believe what Marx meant by a class out for itself, an idea *Gemeinschaft* obliterates.

What makes *Gemeinschaft* pernicious is that this desire to share one's feelings with others like oneself feels so close to the ideal of fraternity. It would be unreal to deny the general human need for fraternity, but what has happened today is that the concrete experience of fraternity has become perverted by the assumptions about personality which rule our culture. Fraternity should be a condition of common action, and its psychological rewards ought to come from pursuing action together. Today, fraternity is regarded instead as a state of being—one in which finding out who we are becomes of overwhelming concern. And the very process of defining who we are, like the process of defining a single me, is troubled because conflict, diversity, and complexity are not part of the process of self-definition. When conditions of external or internal conflict face the group, unity of impulse

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becomes more important than concrete common interests. If there is not unity of impulse (and, given the richness of human impulses this is rare), then the struggle centers on the question of whose impulses are legitimate. Marriages or long-term affairs become testing grounds of personalities, rather than relationships with constraints and interests of their own. Larger communities break apart along the same lines: no matter what the scale of modern *Gemeinschaft,* the logic of sharing feelings is that the self is made powerless when feelings cannot be shared. This is why there exists the conviction, now so prevalent, that one's real problems are those of the arousal of feeling in the presence of others. Sometimes this problem is overtly presented as self-failure; but covertly, in collective as well as individual cases, the desire for *Gemeinschaft* with others is really an accusation against the world for not mirroring back to one the resources for completing an identity.

I have spoken of a crisis of legitimation produced in ordinary life by our very belief in being open and psychologically "liberated." Jürgen Habermas takes up this theme in more abstract terms in his influential book, *Legitimationsprobleme in Spatkapitalismus* (The Problems of Legitimation in Late Capitalism). In this work, Habermas calls for a better society in which human communication is freed of all the constraints of arbitrary power which operate in advanced capitalism. He advances a theory of cognition *(Erkenntnisleitenden)* in which "distortion-free" communication between people is possible. I think his view is psychologically naive but also instructive. For Habermas, the psychological world is deformed by the social realities of power and control; while Habermas seems to be talking about the pressures of capitalism, his real worry, I think, is about the intrusion of society itself upon psychological openness, for in any society power of an unjust and dominating sort will exist. The problem of modern culture lies in its assumption that human beings must somehow get away from the issue of domination in order to be communicative and open. To dream of a world in which psychological processes of open communication, processes which are taken to be morally good, are free from social questions, is to dream of a collective escape from social relations themselves. The elevation of a psychology of openness above the dirt and compromise of power politics is precisely the dynamics of modern *Gemeinschaft.* Habermas's work is not so much a critique of the problem of legitimation now faced by the culture as the very embodiment of this problem.

In sum, the repressive eroticism of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie was the product of three beliefs. The first and most important was that individual personality was immanent in appearances in the public world. The second was that all the details of appearance had a personalistic meaning, so that appearances became fetishized. And the third was that, for all the

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desire to retreat and make private the realm of feeling, intimate emotions like those involved in sex remained exposed and judged in societal terms. There are also three beliefs underlying modern *Gemeinschaft.* The first is the intensification of the idea of immanent personality to such an extent that the world becomes a narcissistic mirror of the self. The second is the belief that the self is a protean phenomenon. The third is that this immanent, protean self interacts with others and creates the conviction of its own existence by engaging in market transactions of self-revelation. In part, then, twentieth-century personality is clearly a consequence of nineteenth-century assumptions, but it is also significant that modern terms of personality coincide with the increasing bureaucratization of industrial society. And the result of modern *Gemeinschaft* is that people unable to "find themselves" become all-too-willing to abandon each other.

PRIVACY TRANSFORMED INTO INTIMACY

Today the phrase "the private family" seems to connote a single idea, but until the eighteenth century privacy was not associated with family or intimate life, but rather with secrecy and governmental privilege. There have been numerous attempts to explain the union of privacy and family life in the modern period, the most notable and direct being that of Engels. Because of the sterility of human relations in the productive system of capitalism, Engels argued, people concentrated their desires for full emotional relations in a single sphere, the home, and tried to make this sphere privileged, exempt from the emptiness which pervaded office or factory. Engels's idea of privatization supplements the movement which Tönnes perceived in the larger society from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellshaft* relations; in sum, the family becomes a miniature *Gemeinschaft* in a largely alien world.

The term privatization has become a cliché today among those who study and write about the family, and has taken on two overtones which obscure its meaning. All too often writings on the private family (an isolated nuclear family in form) assume that privatization can actually work: people who want to go and hide can really do so. This is the assumption of the historian Phillippe Ariès and those of his school when they talk about the family withdrawing from the world in modern times. Missing in this account is a recognition that the social forces which divide work from family also invade the family itself. If we do recognize the pervasive power of capitalism, then we must think of the experience of privatization in the nineteenth-century family as an attempt to make the family warm and snug against the outside, but an attempt which constantly failed because the alien world

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organized personal relations within the house as much as impersonal relations without.

Secondly, the cliché of privatization misleads by suggesting a static condition that of a permanently privatized family. But what happens once the family becomes privatized? After all, this process of privatization has been at work for 200 years, and yet many of those who study it use terms to describe it which apply to fixed emotional states: "isolation," "emotional overinvolvement with kin," and the like. Surely the families of *Emma Bovary, Buddenbrooks,* and *Herzog,* all ostensibly privatized, are not the same.

Let us return for a moment to Engels's view of the pressures creating privitization in the nineteenth century. These are pressures of displacement in one direction: from a work experience more and more empty to family experience forced to provide a full range of emotional relationships, including those which properly belong to, but have been shifted from, the public world of production. What then would generate a contrary pressure, so that the family ultimately failed in its efforts to provide a refuge, failed to become securely privatized? Critical in producing this contrary motion was the idea of personality revealed in external appearances which had crystallized by the 1860s and early 1870s.

In the child-rearing manuals published in the 1860s in both France and England, a common, almost monotonous theme occurs: for children to grow up with stable characters, they must maintain orderly appearances in the family circle. Not only must the child, whether boy or girl, act consistently through "good habits" and "beneficent rules," but the parents must display good habits and act consistently in front of their children. The reason this advice about family dynamics was given is that the Victorian bourgeoisie feared that if appearances were not routinized in the home, and if spontaneity were not effectively suppressed, then the personality would never crystallize and the child would never grow emotionally strong. This fear is linked to a series of assumptions which we have already examined: since basic personality traits are linked even to the minutiae of external appearances, in order for basic personality traits to be formed appearances must be rigidly controlled.

For all the desire family members had to withdraw from the terrors of the world into a relaxed warm zone, the codes of personality in the last century pushed family relations back into the welter of contradictory impulses of order and immanence which troubled the public world. Between husbands and wives the same pressure for stabilization of behavior existed as governed the relations of parents and children. Love between man and woman depended on the ability of the partners to conform to the rules of what a husband and wife should be. But if adherence to rules of propriety

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was necessary at home, the realms of work and home were not therefore identical. In the home, changed appearances would threaten the partners' trust in each other, threaten their sense that each knew who the other was. A repressive, rigid routine became the means of certifying that the marriage itself was real—just as the child was thought to grow in a healthy way only if he experienced others in terms he could trust. For the Victorians, trust meant trust to remain the same.

Thus, the privatization the family experienced in the nineteenth century was a consequence of its search for an order in which stable personality could flourish; and yet it involved a belief in immanent personality which thrust the family back out into the very anxieties about order and immanent meaning which ruled public life. *Both* the desire to retreat and the reconstruction of the outer society are elements of privatization. The first would soon have exhausted itself as a desire had not the second so insistently thrust family dynamics back into the public contradiction, so that the family's mission of orderly retreat never seemed accomplished.

For families of the present generation, privatization on these terms has ceased to exist. There is no longer a world alien to the self to which the self refers. For example, to preserve a marriage as a social contract, people today are not willing to observe proprieties of the rigid sort which characterized the last century; if one is obliged to make great sacrifices of immediate feeling and perception about the other partner in the marriage, then the marriage itself soon seems sour. Because so many nineteenth-century people were imprisoned in respectable but loveless marriages, the breaking of rigid codes of correct behavior may well seem all to the good. The problem is that this change in the terms of privatization has not liberated individuals within the family, but paradoxically, has made the family bond more important and more destructive. The reason for this is that when family relations become withdrawals from the world the person has no experiences outside the family which can be used to judge experiences within it. The family comes to seem the terrain on which all emotions are displayed: emotions which are not familial have no reality because the world outside is only instrumental. The movement from privacy to intimacy is a movement from the family as an unsuccessful private institution to the family as a tyrannical, psychologically pure universe.

What is the rationale for conceiving of the family as socially withdrawn and emotionally complete? It is that of the narcissistic mirror. If the family is not a work unit as in the *ancien régime,* if it is not an arrangement involving an arbitrarily rigid set of roles, as in the nineteenth century, then what appears in this "free" psychic network has a reality and purity unsullied by

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alien contingencies. Once freed from the world, the family will appear to be a disclosure of pure psychological experience. The lessons of such experience will then be taken out beyond the family circle, and psychological transactions in the world will be judged in terms of familial categories, which seem like pure types.

Let me give some concrete examples. Patterns of friendship among adults at work today follow a course unlike those which obtained four generations ago. The more a friendship between adults at work grows, the more attempts are made to integrate the adults into the respective family circles, and to form friendships between the families. American middle-class workers open the gates to the home rather readily to their friends, the French bourgeoisie rather reluctantly, but the path of friendship is the same. One of my students has done a comparative study of friendships between middle-class adults in London and Paris in the 1870s, as these are portrayed in the pulp fiction of the time, and found something entirely different from this modern pattern. Among males, a friend became someone with whom you could engage in escape from the rigors of the family; a friend was someone to take out rather than invite in. Among females, friendship also involved progressive dissociation from family relations; a friend was someone who could become a confidante for grievances against both one's children and one's spouse. Because women were incarcerated in the house, female relationships appeared familial, but in fact friends in the house provided a chance to rail against the tyrannies of the home. A century ago, then, friendship for both sexes meant escape from family ties; today it involves a reinforcement of them.

Taken even something so apparently opposed to the mores of the bourgeois family as the hippie commune. A study of communes in the 1960s found them to be insistently concerned with reliving old family issues and relationships in order to create a higher kind of family. A common problem for the collective family arose whenever psychological needs were asserted against the whole, such as the need for psychological experience outside the commune. When these needs could not be made consonant with the commune's life, then the commune was threatened. For example, if you are sleeping with someone not part of the commune, why is it you don't ask him or her to come live in the commune? The refusal to familize these relations was taken as a betrayal.

The most profound indicator of the family as an image of a purely psychological and morally dominant condition comes from the realm of ideology. Today our concept of psychological emancipation involves liberation of the self rather than liberation from the self. In ordinary speech we

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idealize being able to express our feelings openly or feeling free to do so. Habermas's model of open communication has its vulgar counterpart in the belief that social institutions are bad at the moment when they get in the way of human expression. One example of that vulgar belief is Germaine Greer's *Female Eunuch*. Liberation of one's feelings is basically a familistic ideal. Liberation from one's feelings is a nonfamilistic ideal. The first refers to the possibility of experience in which anything one wants, any sensation one has, can be received by others; that is, liberation of one's feelings presupposes an accepting environment, one in which interest in whatever one does feel, and appreciation for it, will be shown by others. The model for such an accepting environment is the child displaying himself to an audience of adoring parents. Liberation from one's feelings, on the other hand, refers to the possibility of experience which is impersonal, experience in which the person observes a convention, plays a role, participates in a form; the classic locus of such liberation is the city, its classic name cosmopolitanism.

But the contrast cuts further. The self-conscious display of newly discovered feelings to an accepting environment is usually a post-Oedipal phenomenon—that is, it follows upon the child's first consistent declarations of his own independence. The display of behavior in which the child participates in a social form with impersonal conventions is usually a pre-Oedipal experience—it follows upon the child's discovery that he can engage in games. Game-play involes pleasure in the observance of a form, a convention not dependent upon individualized, momentary impulse. Conservative critics of the modern culture of a boundaryless self usually base their attacks on the notion that this culture is regressive and childish. The real problem is that the terms of modern bourgeois personality are not regressive enough; these terms do not permit the adult to call upon the most fundamental and earliest of the social impulses, the impulse to play. The reproach one ought to make to the notion of liberation of the self is that these energies of play remain dormant as the adult regresses only to that point where the self-conscious declaration of his own feelings was an event his protector-parents accepted, even cherished. It is this most fragile, withdrawn moment of family history which becomes enshrined as a cultural ideal when we dream of free self-expression.

A society in which liberation of self replaces liberation from the self as an ideal has obliterated any possibilities of self—transcendence from its moral life. Instead of transcending the self, one makes it into a comprehensive standard of reality. One does not balance public against private; instead, one assumes that one *is*, that life is authentic, when one focuses inward, taking moments of self-disclosure in the family to be the reality in

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which the self is nourished. The outside is vaguely threatening but also simply vague, a reality of necessities, constraints upon the self, bonds to be broken. It is this intimate imagination which destroys the idea of self-transcendence; and when that idea is destroyed, the moral life of a society has become fully secularized.

Transcendence of the self is so deeply a part of the Catholic and Protestant traditions that it is easy to imagine that this ideal is possible only in an overtly and strongly religious culture. But that need not be so; any society believes in transcendence when people imagine that their impulse life may be destructive as well as constructive, and therefore create social rituals or conventions which served to control the impulsive destructiveness of the people in the society. Two of the least religious thinkers of modern times, Rousseau and Freud, believed in their very different ways in a society where such transcendence becomes a moral goal. It is true that ideals of transcendence do involve a certain kind of faith, if not in collective progress or the moral regeneration of man, at least in the possibility of people collectively lifting some of their own psychological burdens.

It is this faith which a society destroys when it sees only personality immanent in any genuine human relationship. The immanent is opposed to the transcendent, the intimate to the social; an anxious expectation of self-gratification is opposed to a faith in mankind despite itself. I believe that this secular vision of ours is a blindness. If a society believes in the unqualified liberation of the self, how can it take into account the simple fact that human beings have destructive impulses which should be hidden from others? This is why a society like ours, celebrating the sheer existence of human feeling, cannot be called privatized. There is no understanding of what it means to harbor an impulse in private. There is no understanding of what disguise to be only a further proof of the authoritarian injustices of present social arrangements; we are prone to convert discretion and tact into signs of domination. Surely the word liberation is itself misleading as a description of the present situation if it connotes a state of progress. A hundred years ago, personality was socialized only by ideas of repression; today it is not socialized at all. These are opposite and equal evils.

Today there is community without society: this pure *Gemeinschaft* is a self-destructive ideal which reifies the family and makes us blind to the evil in ourselves. We might try to end this destructive *Gemeinschaft* from within or from without. The best element of the women's movement has tried the first course; people start with their own immediate feelings and through group transactions and common action try to socialize these feelings, to move from a language of intimate injuries to a shared political commitment.

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When this process works, men as such cease to be the enemy and the set of conditions which lead men to play oppressive roles comes into focus; a social reality comes alive. One of the great failures of the antiwar movement of the last decades, by contrast, was its inability to organize discontent among soldiers because many people in the antiwar movement so personalized the war that every soldier was treated as responsible for the war unless he somehow could prove himself innocent. The idea of the woman's movement that intimate relations can be transformed into social relations is based on the notion that the destructive features of *Gemeinschaft* can be eliminated if people resolve truly to understand the origins of their feelings.

Destruction of *Gemeinschaft* from within is obviously a difficult business: chancy in its outcome, perhaps too idealistic in its assumptions, certainly dependent on considerable character strengths for the people involved. The other strategy against this modern *Gemeinschaft* is no less difficult. To weaken *Gemeinschaft* from without would mean renovating an impersonal social world in which people could escape their families or the burdens of their own feelings. The classic terrain of such a social world is the cosmopolitan city. Yet how can one revive crowd life, a social existence passed among relative strangers at bars, theaters, and cafes, when all the pressures of the culture are oriented to restoring human scale, creating environments in which people get to know each other as individuals and other forms of oppressive localism? Or when the city itself is fled as a place of danger, dirt, Negroes; when the logic of capital development follows the cultural logic of withdrawal? No one could argue that the city in its present state is very attractive, nor that the *flâneurs* of Baudelaire's Paris or the sense of the *monde* of Marivaux's can be recreated as though city planning were an essay in nostalgia. Yet the only concrete strategy against the psychological morality of modern capitalism, the only countervailing power from without against destructive *Gemeinschaft,* lies in renovating the city as a human settlement. The word crisis is abused but it has a meaning: there is a moral crisis in advanced capitalism and there is an urban crisis in it; these two have a real relationship, for until we learn how to create a living, impersonal environment in which people can wear the masks of sociability, and so disguise themselves, the pursuit of a true, essential, and authentic self will continue to be our moral compulsion.

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André Malraux

ANTI-CRITIQUE

The concept of the individual pervades the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth. It stretches from the original to the peculiar, from the ambitious to the irreplaceable: from Rousseau to Napoleon, from Napoleon to Zarathustra, from him to Barrès and to Gide. Individualism was blown to pieces by the atom bomb and bequeathed us biography.

For the first time a civilization could assume the cultural inheritance of the planet. Even if successive civilizations were organisms, and similar ones at that, our own had two unique characteristics: it was capable both of blowing up the earth and of gathering together the achievements of art since prehistoric times. However, this civilization has no assurance that biography can account completely for artistic creations or that biography is the only way or even the best way of approaching the individual.

We have had the exemplary *lives* of the classics, and the far from exemplary ones of Vasari and many others. After that a *life* went hand in hand with an autobiography from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine to those of Rousseau. Then we come to the great biographies of the nineteenth century and of our own time. These were apparently historical, yet the biographer, like the novelist, but in a subtler way, changed a passively endured destiny into a mastered one. Like all literature which matters to us, whether it is the work of the living or the dead, biography has been a part of history and of evolution. When the awareness of metamorphosis comes to dominate evolution and to create its own history, will another attempt to grasp man, a new kind of biography, take shape over and above the one we already know? Under what name should this ever-increasing type of book be known? The old title *Miscellanea* springs to mind, but they are as inconclusive as the others were affirmative, even when they do not give rise to any questions. Let us therefore call them *Colloquies.*

The births of literary genres make one think, since they are few and far between. In 1900, to read nearly always meant to read a novel. In 1945, to the question: "What is the most important fact in literature between the two

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wars?'' I answered: ''The replacement of the Payot literature by the Gallimard literature.'' *Belles-lettres* being superseded by publishing. The literary literature formerly published by the *NRF* and doing what the *Mercure de France* had done for the Symbolists, Lemerre for the Parnassians, and Renduel for the Romantics is no longer anything but an item in the enormous list of capitalist or communist publications—the new field, increasing daily, of books which are neither essays, poems or novels. Colloquies fit none of these. But that book factory—the publishing house—without suppressing *belles-lettres* engulfs them—and Colloquies are an important part of their production.

We learn a lot by projecting a new genre into the past, such as a nineteenth century novel into the seventeenth century, a *Phèdre* by Balzac rivalling a *Princesse de Clèves.* Or the book that a Colloquy would have devoted to . . . Laclos! An interesting idea: here we have the author of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and of virtuous notes on the upbringing of young ladies, the duc d'Orleans' political agent, the inventor of the bomb. . . .

Or better still! *Racine,* despite his fame. Chapters such as: Port Royal—Conversations about the Fronde—Contacts with the King—His early Plays—His Religion—His Work as a Historiographer—His Relation to Greek Poetry—His Travelling to Constantinople at the Time of Bajazet—Dialogue with a Young Greek Writer—Symbols and Allegories—Racine and the History of Antiquity—The Unity of Racine's Art—the Human Condition of a Secretive Person—Racine's World and Ours—and finally a chapter by Racine himself summing it all up. As contributors we have: leading figures of the Fronde, people in the confidence of the Jansenists of Port Royal and of the King, dramatists, a priest, a historiographer, a Hellenist, some young foreigners, a poet, an actress perhaps . . . and as a supplement to the posthumous edition: L'Affaire des Poisons.

This game makes one ponder. It shows better than an analysis the difference between a study and a biography: particularly the life of Racine by his son. Would a modern biography be more complete? It would lose the irreplaceable flavor of the time shared by those people who are ignorant not only of what we do not know but also of what we have learnt. The fish bowl comes with the fish. Should we be able to imagine each contribution, or only its pastiche? What it all lacks is the irrational element produced by any given period in time, and which cannot be reconstructed even when the furniture is genuine and when the collected essays and the author under discussion are of that same period.

Above all, the spirit behind the Colloquy did not then exist; it would require a difficult and implausible *montage* to give an illusion of it. Merely to assemble its component parts is in itself a new idea. Whatever this

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montage, and even if the name of God were only to be pronounced in the chapter on religion, we should still be reading a Christian book, precluding all debate on the conception of man. Confronted with our own time even the Montesquieu of *Les Lettres Persanes,* a far more free-thinking mind than Racine, becomes as dogmatic as a nineteenth-century scientist. Compared to a definitive *Racine*, a Colloquy would cry aloud what the former only whispers: that it questions. And it would show clearly that fundamental ambiguity whereby all biographies establish retrospectively the influences of a man's life in his work. The biographer is writing the life of a mythical character. The statue inspires the testimony and therefore precedes it.

We know how the sculptor works. What was Rodin thinking of as he started carving his *Balzac?* He meant to separate from his biographical being that superhuman character worthy of having written *La Comédie Humaine.* just as tradition has separated from an unknown Dante that aquiline profile worthy of his *Inferno*—and just as every Greek sculptor invented his own Aphrodite. Most of Balzac's witnesses are testifying to readers who would know nothing of Honoré de Balzac but for Rodin's statue: in order sometimes to suggest the image transfigured by this statue, and sometimes the man deserving of it.

Honoré de Balzac no more resembled his demiurgic *power* than Michelangelo his *David.* But ever since the Hellenic busts invented Homer and Socrates after a lapse of five hundred years, humankind has longed for the incarnation of creative genius. Homer becomes his bust just as Aphrodite became her statue. The power to give flesh and blood to the imaginary rivalled the power to incarnate the gods. Like the *Homer* of Alexandria, the mythical Balzac, before he took shape, filled the minds of men with his nebulous symphony.

Romanticism identified the author with his genius. There was a little of this in the Greek god-makers, but the gods had a hand in it; likewise in the Renaissance, but ephemerally, for Donatello was still proud of his leather apron. Nobody takes Corneille for a Cornelian character; Louis Racine simply considered his father as "a fine writer." But the heroes of romanticism, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Beethoven, all those whom Victor Hugo called "The Equals," from Aeschylus, that Shakespeare of Antiquity, down to Shakespeare himself, these are the heroes in the Hellenistic sense, effigies of their genius.

They owe a great deal to the disintegration of the Christian soul. *Phèdre* has strayed a long way from Racine's sinfulness—from Jean's sinful soul, as the curé said over his coffin. For Victor Hugo the *Oresteia* was written by Aeschylus' soul and shared in the same mystery. Art became an appendage of genius. Even in the Renaissance one had genius but one was

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not a genius. Particularly in literature: Petrarch and Ariosto were just better ordinary poets; for the Romantics the worst poet was a bad Shakespeare. The artist has ceased to be a man who "makes" poems, pictures or statues: the verb to make—so important to the Greeks—has ceased to apply to him. A god of art was made manifest through his prophets, but although Olympio was not quite Victor Hugo and Balzac not quite Honoré, the effigy had been created. The romanticism which refused to admit the existence of both Balzac and Honoré also declined to admit that Honoré was an individual who could change his skin and become Balzac when his extrasensory powers were working at their full stretch. Just as romanticism carries its own realism from which all future realism will be derived, so the myth of the artist claims his biography. The same contradictory force impels the reader to create his own *Balzac* by Rodin and to make it more tractable by reading *Balzac en Pantoufles.*

From the very first lines, whether he realizes it or not (and why should he not realize it?), Gozlan writes about the Balzac whom the characters of the real Balzac have created in the imagination of his readers: an image rendered familiar by Madame Hanska's early letters and other correspondence of the period, and to which Rodin gave shape with genius. Honoré has no slippers because the slippers of Monsieur Dupont or Mr. Smith would be of no interest whatsoever. Slippers, in the eyes of a Romantic, only exist if the feet are made of bronze.

We learn from the Key to the Dreams of Mesopotamia that in Babylon they constantly dreamed about octopus-like creatures, although, doubtless, they had never seen any octopuses. The mythical Balzac sleeps on in every one of his readers like those octopuses in the Babylonian night. Every book devoted to an artist partially deals with this symbolic character linked to his time by his mythology, his biography and his work, because that part of him which is made of bronze sleeps in the irrational awareness which unite him with the reader.

It would be difficult, but in no way impossible, to replace a Colloquy by synthesizing it. It would have been done in an earlier time. In the eighteenth century it would have been treated as the raw material from which a single author would have spun a continuous story. In the nineteenth century the separate studies would have been accepted inasmuch as they would have produced a collective work with a single theme such as a continuous story in a biography. Achieving an elaborate perspective, as in painting, implied a system of values as in biography. The Colloquies break with this system as resolutely as Cubism broke with the perspective of Leonardo.

No biography escapes from the unity it owes to its author and none claims to do so. Only when it tries to imitate Cubism does a biography lose

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its perspective; when using fictitious characters it expounds an apparently fictitious thesis. . . . Biography is obedient to the flow of time with a submission oddly contemporary with the novel's attack on chronology. But the novel no longer tries to wear out its characters as it did in the nineteenth century. Flaubert knew Madame Bovary better than Faulkner knew Popeye. The revolution of the novel in no way alters our attitude nor even our feeling towards man. The biographical novel coincides with the substitution of personality for character. Anna Karenina is a personality, Père Goriot is a character; the Princesse de Clèves is neither: born of a genre now vanished and to which the novel was akin—the portrait. What does not exist in our seventeenth century literary portraits is the correlation between the individual and what modifies his individuality, as first propounded by Goethe and then pushed as far as it would go by Proust in the wake of Meredith. But when Faulkner syncopates time it is not time that he challenges (he will not wake up as a child the next morning), it is the story. The writer sets up between himself and the subject of his biography the same distance that he establishes between himself and his living contemporaries; no historical character is intelligible where the characters of fiction are not intelligible. Unlike Hinduism and Buddhism, no modern philosophy has worked out a conception of man that was not to some extent linked to the idea of his continuity. Never mind where or when reincarnation claims its subjects, since in any case metempsychosis or deliverance are the fundamental propositions. Because man is not annihilated by his growing planetary consciousness, he questions it.

The Colloquy originated at the same time as this planetary perspective whose pluralism was in direct opposition to the limited perspectives of the biographer, the director of the Encyclopédie, the nineteenth century itself. It substitutes not another causality but the questioning which causalities and conditionings much submit to.

* * *

In what was the age of the novel let us not see only what can be translated and easily transmitted. There is a whole world of the novel in which the Princesse de Clèves lives with Camus' *Etranger* and La Sanseverina with the heroine of *A Farewell to Arms,* Faulkner with Tolstoy, Balzac with Dostoevsky (he actually translated *Eugénie Grandet*). But Balzac's prestige followed the lead of fashion in Paris or power in London. Whereas the whole of contemporary literature comes to be in a world as vast as that of Shakespeare.

The supreme temptation for the philosopher of art, said Paul Valéry, is to discover the laws which will make it possible to know with *absolute certainty* (and it was he who underlined the words) which paintings and sculp-

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ture will be admired in a hundred years' time. To which Picasso replied that art philosophers had the souls of picture dealers. In a civilization which regards posterity as hazardous, Valéry's "absolute certainty," the fight against chance, becomes as absurd and as invincible as the desire to escape from death.

Which of us does not dream of catching posterity red-handed? . . .

* * *

We know the Classical Imaginary Museum just as well as the Romantic. In poetry it ranges from Malherbe to Chénier in opposition to antiquity, but it fails to see that antiquity invented *literature as an object.* Our anthologies changed when the object of poetry changed. . . .

In the Middle Ages, up to St. Louis, neither the poets nor their listeners perceived the world of poetry as a world of forms. Apart from the verbal checkerboards which the Great Rhetoricians display at their most complicated, true medieval poetry is the legend of chivalry. It is Tristan. The Chartres sculptor made a statue before which one was to pray; the poet invented a new episode to the story of Tristan in which one was to believe. Printing allowed the poet to possess his sonnet just as the sculptor of bronze possesses his statue. So the sonnet, unlike the Ballads of the rhetoricians, ceased to be a trifle, a curiosity, but became the rival of an object of literature brought back to life, in other words—immortal.

In literature and above all in culture, France inherited the Italian primacy in painting. Classical tragedy owed its prestige much more to its high degree of civilization than to Aristotle's canons. According to Voltaire, Shakespeare was a barbarian. Valéry even wrote (in his *Cahiers*, admittedly): "It may be that Racine rid us of two or three monsters of a Shakespearian nature." Classicism considered itself to be not a style but *the* style. In order to come out on top, romanticism had to destroy the myth of perfection in favor of the myth of genius.

Victor Hugo left us a list of his elect: Homer and Aeschylus, Job, Isaiah and Ezekiel; Lucretius and Tacitus, St. John and St. Paul, Dante, Rabelais; Cervantes and Shakespeare. Full stop. None of these elect has been put on the shelf. We might add Sophocles, Virgil, and possibly St. Francis. One might have expected more Great Discoveries. This Imaginery Museum is Israel, Antiquity, and the Renaissance. We can associate Tristan with Dante, not Béroul; symbols rather than works. Can we link Homer with the epics of Asia and the ancient East? No. The training we owe to the combined influence of Israel and Antiquity only just survives the barrier of language,

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whereas in the West the Baghavad Gita remains closed to all but specialists, even in Gandhi's translation. No Indian or Chinese myth—not even the life of Buddha, sublime as it is—comes alive for us like the life of Tristan. We think of Saadi as a rival to Keats, whereas he was a rival of La Fontaine; he owes his fame to our poets, not to his own poems. In the postromantic era, our Imaginary Museum of sculpture had the whole earth to choose from, but our Imaginary Museum of literature did not.

For the museum of poetry symbolized by Baudelaire is as distinct from Victor Hugo's as Hugo's was distinct from Ronsard's. It is up to the reader to reach the poet who no longer imposes himself. The best translation of Höderlin, of Keats, of Pushkin, does not give us the shock that we get from Rimbaud. Beauty had given place to genius, and genius to art. So each kind of literature mingles its two Imaginary Museums. The one inspired by the experience of mankind and what is noble in the world, the other by what we call art. Both founded on the will to create something enduring. But in literature, as in painting, a form of art which derives its values from itself no longer gives rise to an aesthetic; it gives birth to a whole set of problems.

* * *

No new aesthetic is accepted, each of us imagines his own anthology, the collection, and these, put together though refuted are admitted to our Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. If those who come after us—and who will most probably read our writings in the light of metamorphosis—find in them values which give them a sequential meaning, let them be sure that it is a thing which escaped us.

The next poet of genius will change the function that poetry assumed under the reign of Baudelaire, Rimbaud or Mallarmé. The profound change is not in the procession of schools which led from Baudelaire to Mallarmé or from Apollinaire to Verlaine, but in the replacement of Victor Hugo's utterances by Baudelaire's reverie, even if we later rediscover the ineffability of Victor Hugo. In order for this metamorphosis to take place, our very conception of poetry and the value given to it had to be erased, as was the conception of Greek tragedy, in fact the concept of literature itself. Challenge does not kill an art; what destroys it is the question: "So what?"

Our time has known an unprecedented development of biography, in everything that is biographical in history. It seems to see in it a literary genre as eternal as the fantastic, and to consider the relationship of a writer to his work as manifestly privileged. "The lives of exemplary or exceptional men" have been widely studied and recorded: the richness and the scope of what we call the Great Biography dominate; it becomes clearly one of the major liter-

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ary expressions of individualism—André Maurois' *Balzac*, Thomas Mann's treatment of Goethe, bear no relation to the anecdotic records of Tallemant des Réaux. This development does not of course anticipate the Colloquy. But let us substitute a traditional "procession" for the vague idea suggested by the word "Lives." Plutarch, Suetonius, Vasari, Tallemant, Saint Simon. Chateaubriand's Rancé and one of the recent biographies of Napoleon. It would appear that the Colloquy is meant to replace this procession or at least to develop side by side with it rather as modern biography developed alongside the "Lives" and the "Studies." The time is coming when people will say: "In the days of biography. . . . "

Besides, the Colloquy has at its disposal a much wider field, its methods applying to more than the individual life. It selects events as well as people: Mao's Long March, Hiroshima, the assassination of President Kennedy, all follow one another like the acts of tragedy conceived on a planetary scale. The Colloquy will tackle in the same way a Gandhi or Day of Indian Independence, a De Gaulle and an eighteenth of June. Its methods of doing this increase daily and will continue to do so in the near future. How can one fail to see that we are working out a new method of grasping the individual which is not that of individualism? Its method seems to be to substitute for well regulated lighting a vast number of snapshots, bits of film, shadow images. It owes much to journalism and audio-visual aids. Its values are not those of biography.

The pluralism of a Colloquy surrounds its subject, picks him out, loses him, like the beams of an anti-aircraft searchlight on the track of an airplane. The provisional element introduced by metamorphosis meets the element of chance introduced by the Colloquy. So it is hardly surprising that the list of the Colloquies develops concurrently with the awareness of metamorphosis. One must choose, as the seventeenth century would have put it, between knowledge and ignorance. But our own time displays a lively taste for those dubious sciences in which history and psychoanalysis are blended with Marxism and biography. Here the United States has an important part to play, because there writers are not as paramount as they are in Europe. Faulkner is on a par with Picasso rather than with Voltaire or Goethe. A colloquy devoted to Hemingway is more suited to his character than a biography or study that would concentrate only on his art. The link between today's literature, and particularly American literature, and the audio-visual leads us today to the Colloquy; television is and will continue to be more suited to it than to "Lives." It is the actors who prevent a biography from being a documentary, and at the price of constant instability turn the subject of a biography into the hero of a fiction. Whether it is dealing with a biography or a novel, the television screen abandons analysis in favor of

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narration. It does not answer the questions asked by biography, it asks those that biography does not ask.

The novel saw itself as a river at the very time when the myth of genius was about to dominate the myth of perfection, which the vast literature surrounding the novel today cares as little about as the novel itself. When the book takes an event for a hero (*The Longest Day, The Independence of India,* etc.) the characters, and even more the author, are subordinate to it: that author's biography is now as uninteresting as that of a violinist or a geometrician. The work no longer calls the writer before the curtain like a triumphant actor; he no longer has to conform to the formal pattern of the dance. Novels had converged on biography as intensely as what succeeded them diverged from it. Publishing, of which *belles-lettres* was only a part, abandons the image as well as biography. But it does not abandon literature, it discovers it. It transforms the all-enveloping into the all-enveloped, isolating its particular character, and shows by its place in the front rank how little "evolution and conditioning" have counted for in its history. The Colloquy is no longer challenging biography nor even man himself, at least not directly. It is challenging the world of the written word, whose new organizations and basic metamorphosis it senses, as not long ago it sensed those of the world of art.

* * *

Before the war I had the idea of inviting a number of authors to set down what they thought of whatever writers of the past they might wish to discuss. This collection of essays, published with a preface by André Gide, extended only from Corneille to Chénier. But it showed the metamorphosis of literature. I had designed this book with the notion that it would be done all over again in a hundred years' time; that even if it were not done again we would have found readers then as passionately interested as we could be ourselves in such a *Tableau de la Litérature Française* written by authors of 1850. Gide, in part of his preface, described what this would have meant in the face of academic criticism. The strength of the university lay in teaching literature primarily as literary history, which supposedly obeyed the traditional cycle of crudeness, perfection and decadence. But it became clear that literature tends to turn things upside down rather than bring them to perfection, that its history is neither a history of improvements nor a procession of "those who have left their landmarks." Moreover the student sensitive to poetry does not discover the poets "from the origins to the present

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time," he discovers them in a non-chronological order according to the affinities they share. He does not begin at the beginning but today. He goes from Verlaine to Villon, and not from Villon to Verlaine. Already the conflict between academic values and those cherished by the writers of the past disappeared before the strange imperialism of any history of literature. This collection modestly entitled *Tableau* showed that a general view of the subject could be only incidentally obedient to history, and yet, even more than a history written by a single author, it would avoid subjective or impressionistic criticism. Where a system was expected, a sphere was discovered, and literary metamorphosis at work.

I had asked *all* the contributors to speak of what they liked. In this respect the *Tableau* was radically different from what had gone before. On the assumption that art has no cognizance of anything but talent and mere emptiness, the book was concerned only to make the writers it dealt with better, or differently loved, and thus to bring them before the reader; each author became the stage director of the writer he had chosen.

This "criticism," like its contemporary in painting, did not attempt to convince by argument but by contagion. Our dialogue with the past recognized as supreme value, as immeasurable value, the *presence* of a work. It is of no interest to a poet that Gérard de Nerval author of *Chimères* is a lesser artist than Victor Hugo author of *La Lêgende des Siècles*—presence cannot be measured. A resurrected dwarf is no less astonishing than a giant, and he is more like a resurrected giant than a dead one. In dealing with each poet according to his own standards, be it Louise Labé or Corneille, that book broke with the perspective that anthologies had always imposed on poetry. Reducing a long poem to a short play makes what I have called a literary object or ornament. Musset's *Souvenir*, Hugo's *Olympio*, read like extracts from Racine. Just as the enlargement of a photograph gives an "expressionist" element to details, quotations in an anthology give a poem a classical resonance. . . .

The total metamorphosis of a civilization nourished on anthologies is not to be brought about by its reform, but by its disappearance. St. Bernard could not have cared less about the Greek Anthology.

"Understanding a work" is an expression no less vague than "understanding a man." What matters is not to make a work intelligible but to make the reader sensitive to its quality. Failure to understand a work of literature is not like failing to understand a lecture. In the latter case the reader understands *nothing*, in the former he blunders about. He attacks the artist's intention and attributes to him a purpose he never had. He reproaches him for having conceived or badly carried out this imaginary purpose. The endless and deliberate accusations hurled at innovators proves it.

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But is the purpose of a creative artist strictly formulated or are we victims of a prejudice when we believe that a biblical scene by Rembrandt *reproduces* a scene that he had designed in his imagination and thus becomes a *tableau vivant*? Gide wondered whether Baudelaire was not mistaken as to what constituted his own genius. But did Baudelaire really think that *Une Charogne* was a finer poem than *Recueillement*? No doubt the gap between the initial purpose and the finished work is part of a work of art. Having read Rimbaud and Mallarmé, *Recueillement* appears differently to us than it did to Baudelaire. It is by using the creations that succeeded a genius that metamorphosis first separates us from it.

There were many secret geniuses amongst artists recognized by their contemporaries: Baudelaire, Nerval, Diderot, Molière, Cervantes, Shakespeare. But what contemporary of Cervantes or Shakespeare considered either of them to be a colossus? The need to discover in a work of art the promise of survival seems to me, in spite of what Picasso has said, to require the talent of a medium rather than that of a picture dealer. A work of art survives by its own double time, the time of its author and our own. A 1660 Rembrandt cannot be confined to that date, like any other picture painted that year, nor to 1976 when we gaze at it. The statue on the portico at Chartres belongs to the twelfth century as well as to our own, and possibly to the whole time span of art, just as the saint prayed before in the cathedral belongs both to the time of the sculptor and to divine eternity, as well as to the time of the man praying. A contemporary work of art assured of its posterity would also belong to a double moment in time—our own and the future.

We first started to think of posterity as the durability of fame. Victor Hugo "had entered immortality while he was still alive," he remained there. Posterity rendered a belated justice to *poètes maudits*, but fame, once acquired, cannot be erased. No doubt for centuries antiquity was forgotten, but the Enlightenment dispelled the darkness for ever. The French classicists, narrow in outlook, had despised the cathedrals, but they have been admired for a long time. Boileau was not needed for Villon to be admired. The posthumuous life of a work of art was then predictable. Not so for us. Sophocles, like Corneille, was admired by his contemporaries—by the Hellenists and the Romans, as one of the Fathers of Tragedy still admired but no longer imitated. He vanished for a thousand years. He reappeared with a fame equal to Plato's, but the Father of Tragedy became the Father of a restrained art shy of the screams and gouged out eyes of Oedipus and even of Tiresias. Equally, Phidias became the Father of classical statuary, of the *Laocoön* and the *Apollo Belvedere*—London looked at the Elgin marbles with stupefaction and dismay; they bore no resemblance to the carvings of Canova.

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Finally a Severe style emerged from the taste of the great periods, from the discovery of the *Kores* on the Acropolis and from the resurrection of Olympia. Phidias was admired not as the precursor of classical sculpture (about which we care very little) but as the last and most lyrical genius of the Severe period. Placed face to face with the Lapiths of Olympia and the Herakles of Aegina but not with the Venus of the Medicis and the statuary of the Père Lachaise cemetery which were left us by Alexandria and Rome. At the time of the discovery of the real Sophocles, Racine, who knew Greek, appears to have seen in the heroes of Euripides the statues of the Belvedere.

Conversely one could easily trace Gislebertus of Autun or the Tympanum of Moissac, as well as Homer, Virgil, Villon and even Shakespeare or Racine. None of our great styles has escaped metamorphosis since the Renaissance had to resurrect a buried past and romanticism a despised one.

* * *

Dostoevsky could not speak of Julien Sorel in the way we do. The substitution of the Colloquy for the dialogue is less concerned with establishing the kinship between Julien and Raskolnikov than with illustrating the difference between the two novels as it is shown in the working of these two parallel ambitions. It is tempting to compare the methods by which the two writers convey an identical feeling. This is an illusion. The comparison does not illustrate different ways of expression, but a radically different field of operation. It may or may not be ambition, but what Dostoevsky selects from the shapeless fabric of life is not what Stendhal selects. They wear differently colored spectacles. This analysis can be extended to the production of a play, to psychology and even to style. (The change in the narrative allowed Flaubert to use first the direct and then the indirect past tense in the same sentence.) This analysis is less instructive than that first impression so easily expressed by saying: "After we have seen Raskolnikov, Julien looks different."

"The most important thing in a picture," wrote Braque when he was eighty years old, "is always what it cannot say." When there is an extensive Colloquy devoted to Baudelaire (how surprising that there isn't one, but how can a poet be translated? . . .) we will find ourselves wondering, faced with an art which has become a Declaration of the Rights of the Unformulable, if the specific quality of every art, what used to be described as its essence, will not always consist of "what it cannot say."

* * *

The *Rouge et le Noir* that we admire is obviously not the one of Janin

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and Viennet; was it the one of Taine and Bourget who unearthed it? Or even of Barrès and Valéry? The smell of violets now suggested by *La Chartreuse de Parme,* the Lucien Leuwen as understood by Valéry, the Julien Sorel who was first Janin and Henri Brûlard's "monster" and then "Napoleonic" and then "class conscious," all these have come to light because of literary awareness, but it did not invent them, like the interpretations of the novel itself. It was all in the *Rouge et le Noir* of 1830, and the stricken Beyle of 1842. Like the butterfly in its chrysalis. Time did not just polish *La Chartreuse* to change it from the book that Balzac talks about so well into the *Chartreuse* admired by Proust, it transformed it from a drama into an opera. Stendhal, in his lifetime, probably did not feel his way towards this music as we do; but what gave birth to Fabrice as seen by Proust, to Lucien Leuwen as seen by Valéry, if not the combination of these masterpieces or even simply in the arts in general of elements at least heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory, of what Braque has called "what cannot be said?"

DIGRESSION

I want to explain how the metamorphosis of Stendhal's work began. A feeling has grown that he lived the life of the "happy few" like a Valéry Larbaud of his time, forgetting that this metamorphosis is more than just aesthetic. After the book was published in the *Journal des Débats* of 1830: Jules Janin wrote:

> He takes his hero, his monster, with an admirable coolness, through a thousand disgraceful actions and through a thousand stupidities which are worse. . . . Julien's stay in the seminary is the remarkable part of this novel. Here the author is doubly enraging and horrific, it is impossible to give a glimpse of this hideous picture; it struck me like the first ghost story that I heard from my nurse. An author such as this in body and soul goes his way untroubled and remorseless, casting his venom on everything he meets—youth, beauty, the graces and illusions of life; even the fields, the forests and the flowers are disfigured and crushed.

The traitor is hiding behind the curtains! which immediately shows us that the *nature* of the critic's relationship to the novel has changed. Janin evidently read *Le Rouge et le Noir* in the light of what a novel ought to be; then in the light of the seminarian Berthet; and then in the light of novels of his own time which have almost all lapsed into oblivion. Finally he judged it in the light of what were regarded as established fictions—and not many of these as yet were novels—but hardly as a way of life, as a human experience to oppose to Stendhal's own. He judges the book according to convention.

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He wants the equivalent of a Salon painting, a book for his library. We can take our cue from Berthet or pretend to, he obviously cannot refer to our library.

Memoirs and essays affect us in almost opposite ways. We shall never know Henri Beyle, but we know the *Écrits intimes.* The Colloquy brings us without judgment to the testimonies of hate, it shows us how the myth binds us to the past where anything contradictory is too abruptly erased. Viennet, academician and *pair de France* wrote in the *Journal* which he intended to have published after his death:

> This adventurer thrown on the streets of Paris, without a penny to his name, and with a very doubtful character chose to provide a reputable journal with his literary anecdotes; and when he ran out of them he invented some in order to eat. He borrowed a name and chose Stendhal. Its Germanic ring proved the kind of literary sect which had adopted him. He ended up by writing books; the one entitled *La Charteuse de Parme* earned him a reputation of sorts among the fairly numerous mediocrities in the world of contemporary literature. I was speaking about him one day—I forget when—to Monsieur Guizot who had a number of fairly close acquaintances in those circles, and was likely therefore to have known the scoundrel. "He was a rascal," he told me, "and that's all I could say about him, a fit of apoplexy rid us of him on March 24th."

Henri Brûlard comes to mind, and so do *Souvenirs d'Egotisme.*
End of digression.

* * *

It would be an illusion to hope to recover the *Chartreuse* of 1840 from which time alone would have erased the varnish and the graffiti and the medley of colors. It is not enough to scratch Janin in order to find Stendhal. . . .

Let us pause and consider the relationship between the elements, what painters call the palette. They mean by this the choice of colors, and their relatively constant connection which is often governed by a special correlation; sepia and claret in the case of Rembrandt, ashen blue and yellow in the case of Vermeer, etc. . . If we apply it to literature, which has no equivalent, we should call it style, if style did not also mean a way of writing. The elements in a literary work—plot, character, confrontations, analysis and atmosphere—are assembled in the same way as colors. Dostoevsky and Stendhal, like Rembrandt and Vermeer, each have their own particular palette (I omit Tolstoy because he conceals his just as Velasquez often does). The world of Julien and Fabrice, that we call the world of the

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novel, is not confined to fiction. In itself fiction has no particular colors. The relationship between a character and its novel has changed since 1840 almost as much as novels themselves. The character of Fabrice belonged to a story and to his author's talent. His original relationship with the story is replaced by his relationship with the author, just as the atmosphere of Milan in 1796, of Waterloo, of the little courts of Italy, have been rubbed out by Stendhal's universe. The road along which that famous mirror is carried by Mozartian masks does not run through 1820 Italy but through the Italy of Henri Beyle. It is an arbitrary and musical place, and the characters are immersed in it, impregnated by a timeless past, a pure creation of memory. If we turned the *Chartreuse* into a modern film we would lose the Italy of the past, not withstanding the director's talent, the atmosphere that no film can reproduce; you might as well try to reconstruct a still life by Cézanne with real fruits. But why should this be so? . . .

One can no more confine the character in a novel to his biography than a novel to its plot. The cinema attempts to find equivalents for every element in the novel and even for the plot. Assembling these elements does not make the film equal to the novel, the gap between them and it is as great as that between the novel and real life. These films stand condemned, sooner or later. Like those taken from *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Moby Dick,* from Balzac and Victor Hugo. Sometimes a great novel has been adapted with respectful fidelity. So what do we miss in the best film of *Anna Karenina* when we compare it with the novel? Tolstoy. How can we fail to apply this epigraph to him: "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord?" Moving pictures of a love story are not enough to give the novel its eternal resonance. The real Tolstoy is what you cannot transpose when everything has been transposed. *Anna Karenina* is indivisible. . . .

To see the specific and deliberate character of all creative fiction set out clearly we have only to take any novel and compare it with the story that comes closest to it; the life story of a patient told by his psychoanalyst. The day will come when it will be as odd to think of the novel as an imitation of real life as it is now to regard painting as an imitation of real sights. . . .

Literature is beyond melody and narration, just as painting is beyond harmony and subject. But the "constellation" and the elusive, far from transcending metamorphosis are its main purpose, in literature as in painting. We cannot separate an important work from its metamorphosis, a *Night-Watch* independent from what the centuries that followed believed they were seeing. It only exists within the framework of a dialogue, and it

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cannot be for us what it was for Rembrandt, as he had no knowledge of the works of art that were to follow his own. This picture carries the so-called "corporation" label, yet if the characters are substituted and it is replaced by a "corporation painting" of the mediocre Dutch brand it will age like the costumes of its characters: it will belong to the past and it will not enter into metamorphosis. So metamorphosis introduces its own pictures into the world of painting and abandons the mediocre ones in the ordinary world which they depict. Far from pushing masterpieces into the past it brings them out of it, it takes Rembrandt from the limbo where he was ageing and grants him access to the timeless world of art.

The process is less obvious in novels, because they are more hemmed in by time. The illusion is common to both arts. In painting and sculpture it served spirituality and idealism while in the novel its reference was to realism. First of all in its choice of subjects. What in Balzac do we call subject? Everything that would necessarily be included in a film—just as the models are what a mediocre painter would preserve in *The Night-Watch,* so Balzac's models are precisely what move away from us and fall into the common past from which the "visionary" escapes. This "visionary" that no adaptation can express, for in metamorphosis it meets the timeless world of literature, which does not imitate the everyday world in which the logical-illusionists of the nineteenth century believed.

For them, a work of art was the execution of a plan which was expected to pass its examination (grades: success, glory, promise of survival) before a jury vaguely called the public and theoretically the critics. Novel or painting, it was then supposed to have been introduced into the world of its particular art with the rank that the critics or the academics conferred upon it, which eradicated illusion, even a logical one. The cultured public, formerly a caste, became a crowd. Throughout the West the media withdrew from the necessarily undogmatic critics the authority they exercised. In 1857 they ranked Feydeau's *Fanny* with *Madame Bovary,* and virtually ignored *Les Fleurs du Mal.* When was *Madame Bovary* no longer compared to *Fanny* but with *La Cousine Belle,* and Baudelaire no longer to Petrus Borel but to Racine? When was a literary work freed from the everyday world and allowed to enter the specific world where it need not pass any examination, and join the works "which have survived?" Sometimes suddenly: it was Surrealism that allowed Lautréamont, neglected in spite of the efforts of Léon Blou and Rémy de Gourmont, to be published in paperback. Sometimes slowly: Baudelaire's crowning seems to have had a penetrating effect. A great novel and a human being appear to have parallel lives, if the novel is set in time. Man's life goes from conception to birth and then to biography; the book's from a faint outline to its publication and then to its

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metamorphosis. Set in time, the life of a masterpiece and that of man are equally irreversible. The finished book can no more go back to its origins than the adult to his childhood.

* * *

Although we are not sure what successive values the future will attribute to works of art, we believe that our own relationship to them will hold its own. We place ourselves outside history: a disconcerting privilege. We shall never know what *The Wounded Lioness* meant to a King of Nimrod, nor even to its sculptor, but we admire it as much as Goya's *The Execution of 3rd May,* and Picasso's *Guernica* . . .

Our provisional immortalities would have astonished our forebears. This astonishment is instructive, for it reveals one of the strongest girders in the rubble of values amongst which we live. Almost every civilization preceding our own has been concerned with the *training* of man. They have been less interested in knowing what he is, than in laying down what he ought to be. A civilization capable of molding man does not ask too many questions about him.

To these questions the nineteenth century replied: tomorrow science will tell. Today science answers that its discoveries can destroy men but cannot make one.

I once wrote that:

> Men have always been fashioned by other means: religion, family, example and imagination. Of these, the last was not the least important. Spain and Great Britain, who founded the two greatest empires, both had a word for the exemplary man: *caballero* and *gentleman.* For Rome, it sufficed to be called a Roman. Culture became known as the Humanities. Yet our own civilization, differing in many respects from *all* the others, is the first not to hold any ultimate values. The human animal, at its most powerful, is also the first to mistake exemplarity and success. Less and less do we imagine the man that we should like to be.

The concepts which governed the development of man are gradually disappearing. Our civilization is ebbing—in every sense of the word. A Christian of the thirteenth century, or an atheist from the middle of the nineteenth, would say that we have made problems of their certainties. Dante was not disconcerted by man, nor Balzac by the individual, nor Michelangelo by art.

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But our own civilization, perhaps because it is so powerful, seems to us secretive rather than shapeless. "What is so extraordinary," said Einstein, "is that somehow it probably all makes sense." Hence the surge of questioning thought today; delving more and more into time and into the shadows of our very being is increasingly wide-ranging. By widespread questioning we hope to reach out to the fringes of posterity and to perceive the ferment which saves the work of art from oblivion. Every international Colloquy gambles with its immediate posterity, just as Queen Nefertiti, at the entrace to her tomb, plays a game of chess in which the stake is her afterlife, with the invisible deity of the Dead. . . .

Who believes in unchanging literary values? In a literature supplied by the various periods and their authors, like apples from apple trees? In a novel as an image of life or a mirror along the way? People still cherish a faint belief that the great works are reproductions of real or imaginary models, but they are wrong. From hackney cabs to moon rockets, the generation born with the century is in a state of metamorphosis; so are the teenagers who, in the world of today, are politely invited to sit on chairs which have been removed. Who is unaware of the existence of audio-visual aids? Who looks at an airplane without mentally boarding it?

* * *

We are living at the end of the reign of printing, between the period of the word and the period of images—already close at hand—in the age of the novel set between theatre and television. The media have now taken over story-telling: story and stage have been abandoned by painting; painting itself has increasingly specific problems and all this simultaneously challenges the very nature of the literary work.

The novel is undergoing a dual optical illusion: on the one hand the story is assimilated to letters. (The importance of epistolary novels from *La Nouvelle Héloise* to *Les Liaisons dangereuses* is widely acknowledged.) The novel relates a tale—just as a letter recounts anecdotes—and shifts from the living model to the literary transcription by way of the narrative. The other illusion does not concern time. It is the illusion of photographic accuracy applied particularly to settings. It is not as strong as in painting because a strict sense of realism would require, as Flaubert had foreseen, the narrative to be dropped altogether. But in literature as in the plastic arts, the illusion rests on the assumption that the work reproduces the model. Yet sculpture first began with the gods, and literature likewise. The model in any realistic art is only one of the means by which the artist reacts against the idealizing style

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or the religious style which precedes his own. The realism of the Flemish, Spanish, French and Italian schools is still linked by shadows to the Italian idealization. The naturalists, in literature, are still connected with the Romantics by way of the narrative. *L'Assommoir* was held to be the symbol of realism—the very ordinary story of Gervaise and Coupeau. But this story and this atmosphere are not in the least ordinary: in the literary context of the time, they are exotic. Our habit of considering Zola as Balzac's successor is deceptive. This successor is the author of *Nana.* But *L'Assommoir* happened in order to oppose *Les Misérables.*

Zola was not misled by this, since in spite of his debt to Flaubert, he claimed that naturalism would succeed romanticism: chapters, not life-episodes. No novelist would ever have written *L'Assommoir* just by looking at Coupeau, just as no shepherd ever became Giotto by looking at his sheep. It has been thought that *L'Assommoir* is Coupeau plus Zola. We are beginning to understand, thanks to the metamorphosis, that in order to shift from a scenic element to a novel, a change of reference is required. Coupeau and Gervaise only refer to life, but Zola cannot refer to them without referring to the fictitious worlds created by writers. Everyone seems prepared to agree that the library—the world of literature—cannot be a constant reference, but they will only admit—without it being very clear to them—that the world of writing, like the world of art, is formed by adjunctions. The world of Zola would be our own were it not for what has been written since; just as the Louvre of Cézanne would be ours were it not for what has been painted since. In spite of the fact that in the Louvre, for instance, the public desert the antiquities in favor of the Great Period rooms, and that the difference between the literary worlds of two periods is like the difference between the Paris of Balzac and the Paris we know today. The burning of the Tuileries opened up the perspective of the Champs-Elysées, but razed the palace to the ground. We know this, yet we are not fully aware of it because we do not differentiate between the world of literature—in any given period—and that of its writers. It seems to us that the seventeenth century was thriving on Racine, but in fact as late as 1830 the real or imaginary library was still stocked with the ancient classics. Victor Hugo's plays react against the classics and in so doing take them into account; this he does in the name of Shakespeare, with the help of melodrama, but not to relate the story of Hernani. French literature became a subordinate affair when our revered French classics held the limelight. What did Ronsard mean to Racine? What did Malherbe mean to him? His master had not been a French poet, it had been Euripides. The concept of the unbroken line of French literature which made the ancient classics gradually appear archeological—it was the Goncourt's view—was established as late as modern painting. In order to assess

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the importance of the metamorphosis brought about by the gradual fading out of antiquity—not unconnected with the phasing out of Latin studies—we need to imagine what it would be like if, in one or two centuries from now, all our poetry from Chénier to Saint John Perse, and all Western fiction from Balzac to Faulkner were to go by the board.

One no more writes *L'Assommoir* because one has been moved to tears by Coupeau than one paints like Corot because one has been stirred by the morning mist. The novel stems from the novelist's intention. Rather than take my cue from Valéry, who wanted to detect that intention and then form his own opinion of the author's merits, I will take it from Picasso: "One always has to have a subject, a purpose, before one starts on a painting, but that subject must not be too precise." I do in fact believe that the novelist's initial intention is but hazy and that it acts as a ferment rather than as a plan.

This intention is not to be mistaken for the first stage of the plot. A story confined to merely recording the facts would be a short one indeed. Besides a true novelist thinks of his plot in relation to factors which have nothing to do with the story—Flaubert's: "I wanted to write a puce-colored novel" bears this out; so do Dostoevsky's confrontations. Cézanne painting from nature is not bent on imitating it; he tries to find a way of making it look like a Cézanne. Naturally he does not think up a mental model: pictures may be deliberate but they are not imagined—they are actually made. So is a novel. But nature is not the painter's field of reference: "If I were to choose a larger tree, if the river were bluer, etc . . . " No: Cézanne was haunted by the Imaginary Museum, by the picture he was trying to achieve. Its elements find coordination in the world of painting, shapes and colors, and not in the world of trees and bathing soldiers. They are born in the Imaginary Museum, not in real life where the relationship of one thing to another is specifically different. An artist's initial design, the major part of his work, belong to the world of art rather than to the world of matter: through repulsion as much as through admiration.

It was the partial influence of individualism and Impressionism—which to Degas' indignation—made painters labor for half a century under the misapprehension that the artist transcribed his individual vision, yet it would have been hard to believe that the Cubists saw their fruit dishes in pieces. . . .

And then there is *Madame Bovary*. Flaubert read to his friends the first version of *Le Tentation de Saint Antoine*. They thought it bad and suggested: "Why don't you set to write the story of Delamare's wife." This referred to a local incident which was to bear the same relation to *Madame Bovary* as the trial of the seminarian Berthet bore to *Le Rouge et le Noir*. But it is very peculiar that Bouilhet, Maxime du Camp and other profes-

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sional writers should have decided that Flaubert had actually devised this story. The illusion is based on the idea that a novel can be identified with its story. We are beginning to understand that the story of Madame Delamare, even if it is the seed of the plot, is not the seed of the novel; this is because the novel is the sum of all the factors which make of the plot the coat-hanger on which *Madame Bovary* is the dress. As in painting, the work and the model do not belong to the same world. If we can find in local incidents the source of many plots, but not the ferment of a great book, it is because the novelist's true initial outline comes to birth in the *world of writing,* not in the world outside. It matters more that the *Mona Lisa* belongs to the world of painting more than it resembles its original model. . . .

The initial design of a great novel delivers real life from its endless confusion. Life undergoes a change in character as meadows cease to be shapeless in the eyes of the hunter. The creative will neither involves nor suggests a world architecture. It filters the world. This is done in successive stages because the filtering process varies according to the progress of the work in hand, as the pupils of a cat will vary according to the darkness. Nevertheless the creative will becomes what Delacroix calls the dictionary: a catalogue. The novelist draws from it the elements he needs—including those required for his characters—as the painter draws from it the complementary items which the voids left in his still-life call for. But the elements thus drawn are assimilated rather than inserted. A work of art develops as an organism rather than as a game of chess. For in spite of the secret or recognized rules of the game the assimilation is responsible for direction and hierarchy: from the supposed imitation of models to the independence allowed to the characters. . . .

Since the elements of reality penetrate the world of art by a process of assimilation, the world of the novel does not feature a vast reverie or photograph, it features a world whose likeness with life and the world we know is *subordinated* to its own coherence. This coherence is as strict as the one to which the world of music subordinates its ballets or libretti. We become more aware of this through the development of audio-visual narration than through the evolution of the novel. This coherence does not only establish the novel as a genre (it was that already) but also as a convention similar to that of the theatre or the *chanson de geste.* We do not compare Bizet's *Carmen* to Mérimée's hypothetical model. What existence does an opera character have outside the world of opera?

If the initial design is not conceived in a specific world, there is ground for believing that it is simply lack of training which prevents an artist from

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expressing himself equally well in painting, literature or music; even the advocates of art as an expression of the individual accept this so long as it is not stated explicitly. Madame Delamare would not have inspired Flaubert to produce a picture, however brilliant a draughtsman he might have been. All Victor Hugo's skill would not have led him to paint the equivalent of *Booz*. One might wonder what Madame Delamare's death would have produced from Géricault. Not because Géricault was a better artist than Flaubert, but because neither the design nor the subject have any existence in themselves: only outlines of works exist. Géricault would have drawn his creative inspiration from a dialogue with the museum, not with the library: with the world of art, not the world of writing. Could that be what a painter is, first and foremost? Art begins when life ceases to be a model and becomes raw material, and that raw material includes the very life of the artist himself.

If the *presence* of works of art is guaranteed by a creative *fact* which is not subject to analytical thinking, if *Le Rouge et le Noir* does not derive its presence from its genius, but its genius from its *presence,* to what then does it owe its presence? No doubt from the interaction which takes place between happenings or surroundings and the world of writing—a dialogue akin to Stendhal's—from creation itself. What is this world? The age in which we live believes itself to be the first to have some intuition of its nature.

The coordination of language, as of forms, appears subject to the coordination of life, though we find it to be secretly related to the harmony of music. Yet the coordination of art is not subject to time: the only human coordination that is stronger than death.

The literature that exists for us as a presence is in our imaginary Pléiade, not in our life memory. Heirs to the Olympus of unshakable masterpieces, variable literary successions carry like a current the work attracted by the unsteady magnetism of forthcoming creations . . . that metamorphosis is the ultimate law, because everything that is present falls into the past just as surely as it tends towards death. This would be taken for granted if metamorphosis with its padded footsteps were not imperceptibly at work. A work of art, whether famous or ignored, does not gain access to metamorphosis on the death of the artist. Death seldom coincides with demise. But however late metamorphosis occurs, herding the transient residents of the present, it turns the defendant into a judge as inexorably as fate itself.

And starts again. . . .

Posterity no longer believes in honors lists, metamorphosis still believes in cooptions. The Imaginary Museum and the Bibliothéque de la Pléiade appear immobile; so does the firmament.

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Isaiah Berlin

MALRAUX, THE RUSSIANS OF THE THIRTIES, AND MANY OTHER THINGS

When, in 1967, André Malraux visited Oxford he stayed with the Berlins. In the following, Isaiah Berlin talks with Martine de Courcel about his impressions of Malraux.

Berlin: Malraux was, of course, very tired when he came to this house after his lecture. I felt that he thought he had an amplifier in front of him at the Sheldonian Theatre, whereas it was in fact a tape recorder. And so he talked in a low voice, in French—in Oxford not many (including myself) understand rapidly spoken French—and he suddenly realized that the whole thing was not going well, and became depressed, and stopped—it seemed to us all—halfway. I cannot remember what he said, only that it seemed original and interesting, and referred to classical attitudes to beauty, history, and death; but he seemed to become bored with his own remarks and came to a sudden end. After the lecture he was driven to my house, and he was very tired, and then he had a drink . . .

Courcel: And then it was *l'amour fou*. When we had lunch in London you told me that Russia was the link between you and Malraux. What did you mean by that?

Berlin: I don't know about *l'amour fou*, but he then began talking about all kinds of subjects, and I asked him what his journeys to Russia in the thirties were like, whom he had met, and what did he feel—and he came to life in the most remarkable fashion. It was quite clear that he had been absolutely fascinated by his experiences in the Soviet Union in the thirties, when he came across many writers who had not yet been crushed by Stalin —at least, not yet crushed completely—and he talked in the most vivid and fascinating fashion about his experiences and about the works of these various people, particularly Pasternak and Olesha, both of whom he met and liked, and a celebrated journalist who had reported the Spanish Civil War and was later liquidated. It was clear that he felt that he had entered into a new world in Russia of people who were in some way fresh and original and not encumbered by the conventional kind of literary talk of the West. He found in Russia what I found when I went there many years later, although of course the number of people even a non-Communist foreigner could talk to then was perhaps greater. These

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Russian authors didn't talk (at least not on the occasions when I met them) about the weather or literary earnings or publishers or periodicals or rival groups; there was no small talk, no obstacle between them and the object they wished to talk about—Hafiz or Chekhov or Wilde or why Dr. Cronin but not E.M. Forster had been translated into Russian—and there was something very direct and fresh and spontaneous. This moved Malraux greatly, and he returned to it with obvious pleasure and fascination.

I had a feeling about him then that he was in search of some kind of experience which would take away the patina of the conventional world and make things look new and fresh. I wondered whether he obtained some experience of this kind in Indochina, when he went there in the twenties. He was fascinated by these Soviet writers and their directness of vision and noncommercialism. He realized that they were living under very difficult conditions. There was rigid censorship and mounting persecution even then, sometimes very violent; but he talked about Russia with a degree of eloquence and passion which made me feel that he had got on to a subject which had laid its spell on him; that we were not simply having a polite conversation between host and guest on an official occasion, but that I had turned out to know something about a world which he knew too, that we were fascinated by the same kind of people and by the same kind of values among these people. And this created an immediate bond of sympathy—at least, I felt it: I don't know if he did . . .

Courcel: You were, as he wrote to you on the fly leaf of the *Antimémoires,* "son complice."

Berlin: Well, that is perfectly true; after that there was no looking back, after that it all went marvelously well. I can't remember in detail what he said about Russia, or particular descriptions that he gave, but he was literally fascinating.

Courcel: During that lunch you told me also that Malraux needed *"Piqûres,"* that he first had *la piqûre chinoise,* then *la piqûre espagnole* and that de Gaulle was *l'ultime piqûre.*

Berlin: I think that was a terribly vulgar thing to say, if that is what I said. I hope I didn't; but if you remember it, I probably did. If so, I regret it and withdraw it. It isn't that at all, no, it seems to me there are many ways in which people become Marxists: sometimes out of social idealism, because they react acutely to injustice or poverty or exploitation or misery, because they want social equality, or want to end the oppression of one human being by another—bullying, slavery, sycophancy, domination. I didn't think he belonged to that category.

Courcel: Which one did he belong to?

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Berlin: Difficult to say. There are people who become Communists because they think it is scientific, and they think it is important to be rational and to organize the world in a rational way instead of letting things—circumstances, uncontrolled events—dominate one. That wasn't it either, though he may, of course, think in these terms. I doubt it. I think that there are people who become Communists because they are oppressed and disgusted by the corruption and squalor of the world in which they live. Some want to escape from it, others to purify it, and they want to remove, scrape off, the horrible mildew, remove this suffocating feeling of living in the midst of this awful, grey world. In fact, funnily enough, when I talked to Pasternak in Russia he accused me of looking at Russia with charmed eyes. "Here we are," he said, "living in a dreadful, sordid, stifling society, this ghastly pigsty, and you—you look at everything with completely fascinated eyes. How can you? You idealize, you romanticize everything here; when life is only there—art, personalism, Herbert Read —only there, in the West." Well, I think that although, of course, we are very different, I am sure—and Malraux is in any case a man of genius and I am very far from that—I think that he too, to some extent, was interested and fascinated by the same spectacle, because all his life, I suspect, he must have looked for some renovation of things, what the Renaissance, when it went back to Greece and Rome, called *renovatio, restauratio*—a return to brighter, simpler, grander values than their own world appeared to generate. It may be a craving for the future, but if so, it is disguised as a craving for the past.

Malraux talked about visions of splendor. There were three phenomena he most admired: one was Alexander the Great—because he was very handsome and died young, and died of his vices, all of which seemed to him (as they did to John Kennedy) to be heroic vices; the second was T.E. Lawrence, with whom he seemed to me to identify himself to some degree —a romantic, bold, dissatisfied, unashamed, exhibitionist adventurer, who took pride in his fantasies, who also looked for renovation in exotic and remote societies, among primitive peoples; the third was the Parthians, *les Parthes,* because they alone had not been defeated by the Romans. The three things amounted to some kind of romantic search for heroic values: hence, perhaps, his decision to support the hero de Gaulle, whom he felt to be simpler and larger than life, free from doubts, ruthless, all of a piece. I don't know. Malraux asked to be shown the room in All Saints College which T.E. Lawrence had lived in when he was a Fellow in the twenties, just as Gide had wanted to see Oscar Wilde's rooms in Magdalen. In the end, with the help of Professor Ernest Jacob, we identified it: he looked at it—it is a perfectly ordinary little college room, of

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course, like anyone else's—with absolutely fascinated eyes; exactly what Pasternak thought was so absurd about me in Russia. I thought that I understood Malraux's feelings. In fact, I think he is a hero-worshipper, although none of his heroes, except perhaps De Gaulle, and maybe Mao, belong to the twentieth century. Lenin, Trotsky, were not figures in his *panthéon imaginaire.*

I think he wants to live at the height of experience and seeks fulness of life. There are people who loathe *le juste milieu* more than anything else in the world, who want to be at some extreme—it doesn't matter whether it is the extreme Right or the extreme Left—who want to be on the very edges of being, who are bored by "everyday life." If I talked about *piqûres,* that was a particularly vulgar and inadequate way of saying that what he wanted was to be lifted by some unique sensation to an enlarged and heightened sensibility of some sort, which some find in religious, some in artistic experience. In the case of Malraux, his acute visual sensibility plays a central part in this, but above all, I think, contemplation of heroic people, acts, individuals—splendor: some unimaginable ideal of splendor, which he, of course, perfectly well knew, and knows, cannot literally be realized. If this is romanticism, it is so in a classical framework. I think that the painter David had something of this—perhaps, David's attitude towards Napoleon was not altogether unlike Malraux's attitude to de Gaulle. Napoleon said to David after he looked at his magnificent *Sacre:* "C'est très bien fait, Monsieur David, c'est très bien fait." I am sure that if de Gaulle ever said anything like this to Malraux, he must have experienced similar sensations—which I understand, and sympathize with.

Courcel: You said that Malraux's problems seemed personal, always remained personal?

Berlin: Oh, I don't know what I could have meant by that, perhaps that it was nothing to do with theories. I think that he rather romanticizes himself, which is to me another sympathetic characteristic. I don't mean that he permanently lives in a world of fantasy or illusion, far from it, though I think that sometimes he may have fantasies, and is glad to do so. But I think that he does resemble the romantic tradition of the nineteenth century. I suppose that the most characteristic representative of it is Baudelaire—the *poète maudit,* the *âme damnée*—whose vision has in it something wild and contemptuous and tragic, intoxication with black wickedness, the Satanism Mario Praz writes about, which is not bogus, not counterfeit, which really does respond to something genuine in such people's natures. I think that Malraux has a touch of that, yes; it is not decadent and not sentimental; there is something very dry and realistic

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and penetrating about him. What interested me, what made his conversation delightful to me, was not merely his charm, which is considerable, nor his eloquence, which is remarkable, but an extreme sense which I got from him of acute discrimination between the genuine and the counterfeit; he really does know what he wants, he knows what he is looking for, what gives him these sharp sensations which make him live, make him feel that he is alive. I think that Byron somewhere speaks of the desire for sensation—to be conscious of oneself as existing even though it be in pain—and I think that there is that Byronic element about Malraux, wedded to a curious, sharp, ironical kind of realism, which was there in Byron too. He didn't talk about Byron: but that's what he liked about Alexander and T.E. Lawrence, and the wild, unconquered Parthians. This had a very Byronic ring to me. And there was also the defying of men and nature, *contra mundum,* a traditional romantic image of the lonely thinker. Malraux doesn't seem to be a man who believes much in working with a team, or leading a party, or altering his principles or his convictions to adapt himself to some mass movement in order to feel that he is leading the masses, or at least marching with them towards some goal. He does not, I think, mind detaching himself, if need be, and pursuing his own path: there is surely some desire for solitude in his feelings. And some self-dramatization and self-romanticization also—much scorned in our day but to me, I admit, rather refreshing; the whole thing the exact opposite of Sartre, for example.

Courcel: When I first thought about the subject I wanted you to write on in this book, it came to my mind that it could be, "Malraux and Marxism." I then went on to think that "Malraux and the Marxist Adventure" would convey better Malraux's relationship with Marxism, and that in fact "Malraux and the Marxist Temptation" would even be more accurate. I now feel that we are not really going to talk about Malraux and Marxism at all, because he was never actually a Marxist in the proper sense of the word.

Berlin: I have no idea to what degree, if any, he was a theoretical Marxist; of course he must have been one in some sense. I don't know whether he would describe himself as a Marxist at any period, but I can't talk about Malraux *and* anything, because I don't know him and one cannot judge people by their books. One would get a very odd conception of what Tolstoy's own personal character was like if one only had *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* to judge by. You may say, you may well say, that it is more important to understand *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* than it is to understand the individual personality of Tolstoy. That may be so. But if one wants to understand Tolstoy himself, one has to have lived

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with him, to hear the voice, the intonations, see the gestures, have a direct vision of the individual himself, for a sufficient length of time. Deducing people or trying to reconstruct them from brief meetings, still more from their works is, I think, never much good.

Courcel: You must admit that in the case of Malraux, Marxism was not mere intellectual play, nor a way to enjoy intellectual comfort, it was in fact a commitment: he was involved in the Chinese revolution, and he was even more involved in the Spanish Civil War, to the extent that he actually organized and led the *Escuadrilla España.* It was indeed not an abstract approach, but a physical involvement.

Berlin: Oh, I am sure that action is very important to him, because I think there is a craving for some sort of heroic life in him. But I think he's rather like—I don't know, I may be quite wrong, and what I am going to say may be terrible nonsense—I think there's something about him which probably existed in the early years of Christianity, when people who were not particularly interested in the Christian theology, nor even in the view of Man and of God which Christianity unfolded, but who were oppressed by the exhausted—or what they felt to be the exhausted—stifling edifice of the pagan world, people whom Christianity liberated, for whom it was a transformation and a revolution, a vision of infinity which made all things new, a new heaven and a new earth, restored an earlier, younger world. Perhaps it sprang from a neoprimitivism, as if history were cyclical, and this was the beginning of a new cycle. That, I think, is what Malraux may be like, what may have attracted him originally to left-wing movements whether in Asia or in Europe, or in Russia. He is certainly fascinated by Asia. When he went to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford what he most wanted to look at were Chinese, Persian, Afghan things. We all knew, of course, of his fascination with China and with Indochina. It may be that he wanted to experience some sort of contrast, conflict, between the old Western civilization and something which would excite it into a new vitality by producing a spark, by bringing two cultures together and creating a collision.

I think the idea of a sort of collision of conflicting values, and the emergence from this of something new and fresh, and not simply a gradual evolution of something which had in embryo been there all the time—that, I think, may be what in some way moved him. That is why he talked about Russia very much as I tend to think of it, as a world which for various political and historical reasons had to a large degree been insulated from what was going on in the West, and which therefore for Westerners preserved a kind of strangeness, a Jansenist, *au-delà*, quality, in which some things, some writers, some values, some forms of experience

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were brighter and larger than life, more authentic; where human beings behaved more like human beings; where what they said sounded more genuine, in some ways more childlike but also more sincere. That, it seems to me, is what attracted him—a certain poetical, uncontaminated quality in the lives of people he met.

This, of course, often happens to people who live under tyranny: because they are isolated, forcibly isolated, from the outer world, and are reduced to bare essentials, and to leading a kind of controlled, aborted, and therefore childlike life, they sometimes are purified by this, kept from growing up, and so free from the defects of freer, more easygoing, more open and more blasé societies. This is one of the by-products of being forced into private life, when public life is dangerous or forbidden. This, I think, he did encounter in the Russians, particularly the Russian writers and artists whom he met. We, or rather, he, talked about their charm and imagination in a vein of happy nostalgic reminiscence.

What he likes to talk about, I think, is exceptional people. While he was at Oxford he had various tasks to perform: to receive an Honorary Degree, and to open the new Maison Française, and so on. In the course of this he had to meet a certain number of official representatives of the University and was himself accompanied by official academic persons from France; and although he was quite pleased to be doing this, I think, he really seemed to want to resume talk about the interesting persons outside the Western world whom he had met or had thought about; he found it rather difficult to do this with most of the perfectly polite but slightly bewildered Oxford dons, some of whom, perhaps, if he had known them better, he might well have found interesting, but whom there was no opportunity to meet at length if one was engaged upon a purely official visit of this kind.

When we were alone in our house, he would, with evident pleasure, resume his very vivid and fascinating descriptions of Bukharin, for example, and other old Bolsheviks who, in his opinion, knew that they were doomed, and knew that they would end badly, but who at the same time marched towards their fate in a manner which he found irresistibly interesting. He liked talking about "fatal" men and women, obsessed lives, lonely Byronic souls: for example, I remember a long conversation about Lou Andréas-Salomé, about whom a book had just been published, who lived in Russia, then in Germany where Nietzsche had become infatuated by her, and then became the mistress of Rilke, and ended by captivating Freud and becoming a psychoanalyst herself. The life of this peculiar, gifted, and fascinating woman absolutely gripped him. And he talked of other people who led self-absorbed lives. He didn't want to talk about

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Victor Hugo, who struck him as a terrible, noisy bore, although he thought he was immensely gifted. But he talked about Delacroix, whom he liked because he was proud, bitter, and grim, and above all, on his own, a man by himself, *solitaire:* Hemingway, he thought, was a phony *solitaire,* unconvincing, no good; he knocked him out. He liked uniqueness, if possible with a *maudit* strain; hostile, doomed figures who despised accommodation of any kind. Defiance is what he seemed to like best; in spite of his official position, in spite of being a member of the government, in spite of apparently seeming to be a wholly dedicated, conformist Gaullist by this time, the idea of defiance, preferably with an element of dandyism and swagger—refusal to transact, the insistence of self-expression at the expense of everything—clearly attracted him. I expect I am painting the wrong picture, because I seem to be simply painting a picture of a characteristic nineteenth-century romantic—he's not that at all—I'm afraid I'm not very good at psychological vignettes—I really must stop.

Courcel: I remember that conversation about Delacroix, and how you tried to reconstruct his life, with Malraux handing on a piece and you supplying the next, and so on. But I also remember that you talked about music.

Berlin: Yes, we talked about music a little, and he obviously didn't really like music much. He offended Stravinsky greatly, you remember, by describing a funeral march by the Belgian composer Gossec (at the time of the French Revolution, or perhaps a little after, but at a time of revolutionary change). He ordered this to be played at the public funeral—no, not a funeral, I think it was a commemoration—of the great Resistance leader Jean Moulin; he was clearly pleased about finding the piece by Gossec, with that particular pleasure which amateurs always have when they discover something which professionals haven't told them about—I know the feeling all too well.

Courcel: When "the God failed," people like Koestler and Stephen Spender were left in the dark, but for Malraux there was the possibility of salvation through art.

Berlin: No, he didn't strike me as being saved. Stephen Spender was a very short-lived Communist, for not more, I should say, than three or four months in all; he was a great friend of mine, and still is. I am very devoted to him. Communism was an irrelevant episode in his life. After all, everybody who had any heart at all was attracted to something of the kind in the terrible thirties. I was only saved from temptation to work for or with the Party by the accident of witnessing the Russian Revolution in some of its less attractive aspects as a child and later, from a distance, watching some of its gloomier consequences. I don't think salvation is what Malraux

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is looking for, or obtains; no, I think art means a great deal to him, simply because he has a passionate attitude towards creativity as such, and he conceives it in a romantic spirit. I think creation for him is individual self-expression, and not simply the creation of an object: it is human communication by these exceptional beings who are larger than life, see more, suffer more, see through more, despise more, understand more, despair all the more—that's his conception, I think, of what great men, major actors, are like.

One of the things I enjoyed—and perhaps he did too—was our last conversation, on the way to the airport, of a kind that undergraduates have with each other. We began talking about whom (if we could go into the past) we would have liked to meet, to ask to dinner, and so on. I was sitting next to the chauffeur. I turned round asking him, "Now, if you had to ask Plato or Socrates for lunch, which one would you choose?" He answered without hesitation: "Certainly Plato. It would not be very easy, but one would eventually get him to come—he is such a snob." We went on to consider whether Plato would have snubbed Dante, and there was more of this kind of thing. He always came back to Alexander the Great whom he wanted to meet very much indeed, and I didn't want to meet at all; I thought he would have been too savage, arbitrary, but that was exactly what he liked. He wanted to go to Ctesiphon to meet some Parthians, but he wouldn't, he agreed, have understood a word they said because their Greek must have been appalling—the Parthian language is completely lost—but he didn't mind that; what he wanted was to gaze upon them. Our conversation became one of mounting gaiety, in which all kinds of fantasies were built up. It may seem an extraordinary thing to say about a man of such talents, who has lived so eventful a life—that there is something ungrown-up about him, which is peculiarly attractive, something very young, very unexhausted. If the right subjects are touched upon, and the right atmosphere conveyed, a great fountain of intellectual gaiety springs forth, of rare quality, and to me very delightful. There is nothing pompous about him, nothing stuffy or solemn, in spite of a clear sense of his own importance. Provided the subject stimulates him at all, he goes off at fantastic tangents, which carry one with them. All I can say is that it was to me an extremely exhilarating and delightful visit, and I had that particular sensation, which one has with certain types of men touched by genius; namely an enormous heightening of vitality, and increasing flatness and regret after they are gone, though a sense of excitement lingers on for some time after.

He is an eloquent genius, with no philistine fear of brilliant flights of rhetoric. After the unsuccessful lecture in the Sheldonian Theatre, on the

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following day he opened the new Maison Française; he sat on the platform with a somewhat Napoleonic expression, and seemed only half to listen to the speeches of everyone else. Then he rose, and for, I suppose, about four minutes spoke with the most magnificent eloquence about the obligations of those who wore the gowns of university teachers, the obligations of intellectuals in the terrible world of sex and blood and banality in which we were living. Most people there, I think, were rather embarrassed by this old-fashioned kind of rhetoric, and thought it unsuitable to our time and circumstances—the English don't take very well to the grand style of this type—but I thought it was absolutely splendid, and think so still. This kind of eloquence is what W.B. Yeats used to defend against those who believed in wringing the neck of rhetoric, the deflation of words to the shape of the flatness of experience in an exact and excessively austere fashion. Malraux believes in poetical afflatus, and this is a thing which is exceptionally unfashionable today.

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CONTEMPORARY CRISIS

WHILE AMERICA BURNS

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mr. Barrett's letter and William Phillips's reply are part of a continuing series of comments on the political and economic crisis in America and Western Europe.*

William Phillips
Editor, Partisan Review

Dear William:

In trying to collect my thoughts on the present situation, I found myself persistently going back to the time more than twenty-five years ago when I was connected with the magazine. A great deal has happened in between; but it seems to me that the situation then, or the situation as *Partisan Review* then faced it, might serve as a channel-marker against the present turbulent currents. You were then both mentor and friend; and as my mind turns back in that direction, it seems only natural that I should be addressing my thoughts to you.

The great and overshadowing difference between then and now, it seems to me, is in the relative positions of power of the United States and the Soviet Union. America has become much weaker, markedly so after Vietnam and Watergate; and Russia much stronger. Everything else in the contemporary scene comes under the shadow of this shifting balance of power. If the United States were to go under, liberty would disappear for mankind. I don't say this out of any patriotic conviction of America's messianic destiny. History has simply dealt the cards in this way. If the American presence were to disappear, western Europe would slide quickly into the Soviet bloc. Britain would be left an isolated island with a faltering economy and severe class conflicts; and Japan would be similarly isolated, with mounting internal pressures of its own. Anything, then, that weakens the strength of the United States weakens the cause of liberty.

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In the past we had always nursed the hope, silently at least, that the Soviet regime might eventually liberalize itself. We were socialists, after all, and in some sense it was a socialist state. Perhaps we fixed too much on the person of Stalin as the evil figure responsible for the dictatorship. But now any such hope of liberalization is illusory. The iron law of a Communist regime is that its bureaucracy must not only perpetuate itself but expand its power as well. The permanent revolution is the permanent dictatorship. Security from external attack doesn't lead to any relaxation of its grip. We should have known this as early as 1946. At the end of the War, Russia had secured its borders and accumulated a fund of good will on the part of the Allies as a residue of wartime partnership—and it chose to launch the Cold War. One has to emphasize this point now against the distortions of our various revisionists. In 1946, when I joined you on *PR*, I found you already engaged in the Cold War, which I promptly joined. You were politically avant-garde then, ahead of the rest of the country. *PR* was engaged in trying to point out to liberals their illusions about Russia and Russian expansionism. The response of the American government, which seemed to us so tardy and faltering, often left us feeling like climbing the walls out of frustration. That's the way it is to be politically avant-garde. The evil is not that the United States eventually responded to the Cold War, which it had not initiated, but that it carried it on so stupidly during the McCarthy era.

The Vietnam War was another stupidity on America's part. It could not have waged a more pro-Communist war if it had deliberately set out to do so. The struggle against Communism, which is bound to be long and protracted, and will go on Détente or no Détente, has to be a matter of much more limited commitments.

One thing that remains constant now as then is the presence of the Fellow Traveller, though he has now changed his colors. Usually he professes to be thoroughly disabused and cynical about Russia, but the cynicism ends by equating the imperfections of American democracy with dictatorship. It's as if we were back with Orwell and Koestler arguing against the fellow-travellers of the late forties. China, or Cuba, is now the utopian and fair-haired darling. We have Park Avenue Maoists as we once had Park Avenue Stalinists. (The hostess, at one fashionable party I attended, wore a Chinese gown just to set

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the right tone.) Apparently we'll have to wait another generation until the Chinese dissenters begin to appear in order to change this attitude.

Fellow-travelling appears to be a permanent part of modern life, a condition of the modern spirit. It is "aesthetic" politics, "literary" Marxism, the lure of utopian thinking on the part of those who feel secure enough in their liberty to play around with it; a surrogate for the religion they have lost. In a back-handed way, Dostoevski was right: the socialist question is above all the religious question.

Anyway, everybody else seems to be doing the old-fashioned fellow traveller's work for him. The democracies are going through an orgy of self-destruction just as the Greek historians and philosophers described the process in the ancient world. We seem to have lost the sense of liberty as something connected with the continuing life of liberal institutions, which we have all been engaged in undermining in recent years. At this turn of history mankind (the intellectual most of all) seems hell-bent on enslaving itself. Sometimes I get the impression that nobody is really interested in liberty today except the Russian dissidents.

On the cultural scene: there is an awful lot of talent knocking around, but much of it, I'm afraid, goes to waste on the trivial and aimless. We've been in the midst of a cultural inflation for some time, worse in its way than the economic one. When we first knew De-Kooning, he hadn't yet had his first one-man show, and was just scraping along. It was you—just to get the record straight on this—who opened the pages of *PR* for Clement Greenberg to push the Abstract Impressionists (the name didn't exist then). That was a first step in what later turned out to be a whole revolution in the artist's financial status. The artists who formerly had trouble getting galleries began to have income-tax problems. It's nice that with all the money flowing around, some of it should drain off to the artists. Still, affluence has brought other problems—the commercial conniving of dealers, the bandwagons of taste, public relations promotions, etc., etc. In short, a cultural inflation, with its consequent debasing of real values. It's nice that Pollack's estate should have been able to get two million dollars for "Blue Poles," but is the picture really worth that much?

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The more inflation the less seriousness about the art itself. The kinds of ambition for the individual work that the movement—and DeKooning particularly—had back in the late forties would seem strange nowadays. There is more trifling with the tricks of the medium, non-art as art, nihilism toward art—in a word, camp. As the substance becomes more minimal the rhetoric about it becomes more inflated. A recent ad in *PR* (I don't of course hold the magazine responsible for its advertisements) announced a collection of stories under the title *Superfiction*. Isn't it enough for the writer to aim at a good piece of fiction, which becomes all the harder as literary history accumulates, without seeking some new and inflated genre? "Supercolossal" used to be Hollywoodese, but the literary seem now to be aping that style.

In the history of art the great movements—the Renaissance (which was really two different movements), the Baroque, etc.—ran their course in less than a century. Their followers couldn't see, or didn't want to see, when the original wave had run out. As the imitations got more elaborate they became emptier, more inflated as they became more contrived. Similarly, nobody seems to want to face up to the fact that the great Modern movement has by now come to an end.

That should be an opportunity for the critics to reexamine that movement and find out what was really happening. They might be surprised to discover the traditional values that were always present in it. Art is, after all, one of the most traditional of human enterprises. Thus modern art taught us to see primitive art. Now that the superficial novelties have worn off, how Proust resembles Balzac, or Joyce, Dickens, begins to interest us as much as the differences. Once DeKooning was trying to do the same thing as Giotto—to impart as much movement and tension to the pictorial surface as possible.

One great legacy of the Modern movement could be that it taught us to take experimentation in our stride. We're no longer shocked by it, but we're no longer taken in by it either. We allow the artist all the gimmicks he pleases; but when we have looked past them, we have to put to him the simple and central question: Does he have anything to say? We may discover he is empty. That might be enlightening. We might discover we are empty, too. That could be a beginning.

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In short, we are caught in a difficult period of transition, of reassessment and rediscovery of values. That is bound to be painful, but it could be challenging work, a new world to discover, as we go about constructing the postmodern period. Unfortunately, this adventure has to take place under the shadow of the awful and brutal political reality we cannot allow ourselves to forget: that we live in the time when the future of liberty may be decided for the whole of mankind.

Many years ago, William, you kidded me that I was "paranoid about the future." You could always beat me in an argument, but I've waited a quarter of a century to make this snappy retort: "Was I wrong?"

WILLIAM BARRETT

Dear Will:

It was always a pleasure to argue with you, regardless of who won, because both of us were interested in the truth almost as much as we were in arguing. And if you were paranoid about the future, still, as Delmore used to say, and he was an expert on this subject, one could be paranoid and right. Anyway, the future has not turned out so well, and it may be better to be paranoid than to be schizoid, as I am. I seem to have mixed feelings about almost every political question facing us, particularly the question of the role of America in the coming period. But I think my own uncertainties reflect the complexities of the situation.

One of the complications is the politically polarized atmosphere, which makes it difficult even to discuss the issue of American versus Russian power, and the related issues of the preservation of freedom and the future of socialism. If one is anti-Communist, even from the left, one is tagged as a conservative; and if one is critical of America, he or she is lumped with fellow travellers and apologists for Soviet policies. It has been particularly difficult to maintain a radical, socialist perspective—or conscience—in a time when a vocal part of the Left

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confuses progress with backwardness, while the Right has cast itself in the role of defending democracy.

Obviously, there are no simple answers. And though I agree with much of what you say, I think your argument is too syllogistic and hence leaves out many factors. Essentially, your point is that if America became so weak that it could not resist Soviet, or Communist, expansion anywhere, then the kind of freedom that we identify with Western democracy would almost surely disappear—unless communism, itself, in these circumstances would develop into the free society that Marx envisaged. As things now stand, I believe you are right. If America could not defend Western Europe, no doubt it would go communist and come under the Russian sphere of influence—again, unless it was strong enough to defy the Soviet Union. But what is assumed in this line of reasoning, is that America and Europe are stable entities with well defined interests, democratic commitments, and predictable developments.

The fact is that America cannot be counted on to defend even limited forms of democracy, as we have seen in Spain, Portugal, and Greece, for example, and as we can now see in the Mid-East. If America is so dedicated to the defense of Western democracy, how can we explain the games being played with Israel and the Arabs? I need hardly remind you that in many, if not all, situations, the love of money is stronger than the love of liberty.

Besides, the strength and stability of Europe and America depend partly on the ability to solve their political and economic problems. The power of the Communist parties on the continent is not due simply to their clever propaganda or the craving of the intellectuals as well as the masses for political illusions.

And all this talk about America being the bulwark of democracy does nothing to ameliorate the conditions that deny it that role. On the home front, the notion of America's global mission, like most patriotic rhetoric, is actually a substitute for enlightened thinking and action. The truth is that the country has become a jungle of competing interests and pressure groups, corrupt and anarchic, unable to plan its economy, its ecology, its traffic, its control of crime, its foreign policy, its race problems, its urban decay. This state of affairs used to be rationalized by the myth that these contradictions were essential to democracy.

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What I am saying is that the proposition that the decline of America will lead to the decline of political and intellectual freedom is a half-truth. It does not take into account all the other factors that create totalitarian parties and regimes. And it ignores the fact that the affairs of the country have been in the hands of those who seem least capable of dealing with them. Unless one has some alternative politics, one is simply putting one's faith in the people and ideas one never trusted much in the past. And if, as you imply, your position is that of critical support of the policy of the lesser evil—a position taken by liberals and radicals when their ideal, long-range program did not appear to be viable—then it seems to me your critical attitude should be both stronger and clearer.

But aside from the practical and immediate implications of an argument which is basically an appeal to Realpolitic, I think one must have some larger vision, if only for intellectual reasons, some idea of a better social order, which would provide a perspective from which to criticize both the communist and our own societies. Otherwise one's political identity is dissolved in that jumble of opinions that can never extricate themselves from the assumptions of the status quo. Even if it is true that America is now the guardian of freedom, this is at best a reassuring observation, perhaps a fact, but scarcely a theory, and hardly distinguishable from the ready-made opinions of all the stalwarts of the popular media. No politics, other than support for America, follows from such an attitude, support, that is, in the event of a confrontation with Russia, which in any case few people would question. Obviously, your own knowledge and insight, for which I have great respect, are incomparably greater, but they are not given an adequate outlet in a statement that confines the future of freedom to the limits of American power.

Hence, the real question is not whether liberty is bound up with the American future, but how to evaluate American policies and motives. Obviously, reactionaries would have widely different estimates and programs from those of socialists, for example.

You speak of the change in the ratio of American to Soviet power, but of the persistence of the "fellow-travelling" mind as a constant. Here, too, I think you are right. However, I believe you are wrong in your assessment of its importance and its influence. In the

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thirties and forties, it seemed necessary to dispel the illusions about Russia and the Communists because so many people who should have known better were taken in. Now, on the other hand, with the exception of those who cling to a half-baked idealism, the whole country has no illusions about the Communists. Also, at that time, the unmasking of Stalinism was part of the struggle on the Left, to educate honest but mistaken radicals and liberals, and to free the Left from the corrupting effects of its association with the Communists. Today, however, people may be muddle-headed, but no serious person on the Left is pro-Communist. Neither on the Right nor on the Left can the problem now be said to be the failure to recognize the nature of communism.

The problem for the country is not whether it understands the aims of the Communists, but whether there is a national interest and if so what its relation is to this understanding—in other words, whether the support of democracy is always in the national interest. As you know, Marxists have usually claimed that there is no national interest, that there are only class interests, and that the so-called national interest in this country is only a mask for the interests of the dominant economic class. This is probably too schematic and reductive a view of national motives. Nevertheless, many recent American policies certainly seem to suggest that the government has tried very hard to prove that Marx and Lenin were right. True, there have been instances when the country did not appear to act either in the interests of the nation as a whole or of any one class. I must confess that I see no explanation for this but stupidity—the kind of myopic stupidity that comes from the national addiction to empirical, day-to-day thinking. And I do think stupidity has been underestimated as a factor in history by Right as well as Left ideologues.

When you talk about the cultural decline, it is not clear whether you think this is connected with our political predicament and therefore with the question of freedom. If so, then what you take to be the signs of cultural decline must be seen as part of the political situation. For what are the cultural anarchy, the reign of pop, the popular distortions of modernism—what are these triumphs of the market if not products of the system of advertising and packaging. And this is the system that is supposed to save our freedoms and preserve our cultural

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values. I need not remind you that the serious art of this period has been critical and detached.

And in your dismissal of the art scene today I think you make the mistake of lumping fashionable versions of the avant-garde, tailored to the popular market, with work of genuine talent by writers and painters who have resisted the pressures of the time. Most poets, for example, perhaps because of the intractability of the medium, have kept their distance from pop taste. And a number of novelists might even be said to have become too eccentric in their effort to stay out of the entertainment business. Thus, in failing to distinguish between the conformist and noncomformist part of the culture, you are confusing the cure with the disease. I am sure you have no such political motives, but you must be aware that a favorite gambit of conservative critics is to blame the cultural slump on the radical sensibility, that is, on the sensibility that is opposed to all the things you are against.

What more can I say—except to deplore the situation in which people who have the same values and goals find themselves on opposite sides of the fence. In the "old days," which you refer to apparently with some nostalgia, there was plenty of nonsense, but one felt closer to those one was able to argue with. One can argue fruitfully only with those who share one's assumptions, but in the fragmentation and confusion of thinking today differences become barricades.

W.P.

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Three Poems by Michael McClure

FREEWHEELIN'S TATTOO

FRANK, HOW PLEASED
I AM
to see that Death's Head
tattoo of red and blue
blocked in
with solid black;
how good
to view the sign
of madcap finality
filled up
with darkness
to make a wing shape
forever flying
on your arm.
It
is
your new charm
or token
and it shows
that spirit cannot
be broken
but ever grows
toward flight.

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POLITICAL POEM

ANARCHY LEADS
to perfect discipline.
The sin
of Emptiness
is born of steady progress.
Let
us
laugh and scream
our way
to fine-edged embarrassment.
We're merry
hungry grizzly bears
within a tent
of gossamer.
We're balls of lint
upon a shining
floor.

The eyes of deer,
Black holes in space.
The look upon
a lover's face.

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TO THE DRIVE-IN TELLER AT THE BANK

YOU FACE ME WITH
THE COLOR PHOTO
OF YOUR CHILD
as if she were you
and the universe
is some mild
beast to smile on
the endless
reflections
of your image.

I hope you're right.

Our minds are daubed
with opalescent caves.

David Shapiro

SCREEN

The window-shade is a small quantity
Shades of evening, of death, of difference
Shading off into insubstantial copies
Small accompaniment

It is thin, the window-shade
And thin events come forth
May your window-shade never be less
Your courtesy and your shadowy deep frame

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Delmore Schwartz
(1913-1966)

LOVE AND MARILYN MONROE
(after Spillane)

Let us be aware of the true dark gods
Acknowledging the cache of the crotch
The primitive pure and powerful pink and grey
private sensitivities
Wincing, marvelous in their sweetness, whence rises
the future.

Therefore let us praise Miss Marilyn Monroe.
She has a noble attitude marked by pride and candor
She takes a noble pride in the female nature and torso
She articulates her pride with directness and exuberance
She is honest in her delight in womanhood and manhood.
She is not only a great lady, she is more than a lady,
She continues the tradition of Dolly Madison and Clara Bow
When she says, "Any woman who claims she does not like
to be grabbed is a liar!"
Whether true or false, this colossal remark
states a dazzling intention . . .

It might be the birth of a new Venus, among us
It atones at the very least for such as Carry Nation
For Miss Monroe will never be a blue nose,
and perhaps we may hope
That there will be fewer blue noses because
she has flourished—
Long may she flourish in self-delight and the joy
of womanhood
A nation haunted by Puritanism owes her homage and gratitude.

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Let us praise, to say it again, her spiritual pride
And admire one who delights in what she has and is
(Who says also: "A woman is like a motor car:
She needs a good body"
And: "I sun bathe in the nude, because I want
to be blonde all over.")

This is spiritual piety and physical ebullience.
This is the vivid glory, spiritual and physical,
of Miss Marilyn Monroe.

Ann Lauterbach

A VISIT TO THE COUNTRY

There are legends which please the inner ear,
that part that yearns, does not hear
but knows when the mechanical rabbit is slain
by the real thing. The real thing
revokes the vulgar indiscriminate corpse
into pain of birth, told and retold
by the woman who otherwise does not speak.

She stops drinking and digs holes for roses.
One is called Chicago Peace, bred
to resemble the white rose on the tapestry
in which the unicorn distills myth from history.
She thinks of Saint Francis as the bluebirds nest
in a small wood box. They exist, but
Saint Francis is a reverie among bald, silent monks.
On an island in the pond two turtles shine.
They wait for centuries for the geese to lay.

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Anne Waldman

SISTERS

First make the mouthpiece classic
so that my passionate Spanish sister
will take some lessons Take her out of hand
& blow her into the palm of the world

Put a date into the palm of the world

it's her birthday

ripe palm age to come so wise to
words
it needn't be a question of how handsome she is

Accept the apologies of the sisters

*

Sister Solitude has another sister
whose got a punch you won't forget
or more into until earth abandons mitts
to summer Summer gives a fast speech
covering the earth with a plant

*

One descends from the mittor to take
the prize
the other sends out a message to resemble youth

waddling away

They are my sisters both Since he is not
sufficiently paid
attention to
let him go out the door backwards
my sisters say
they are so cruel.

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Leon Stokesbury

FOOTLIGHT PARADE

A short man was excited. He wanted to put on
a show. Women were dancing. He was excited.
People ran around. A blonde woman liked him. But
he didn't know it. He liked another woman.
Well, he got drunk. He wasn't supposed to though.
Women were dancing. They were singing. Then, the blonde
woman saved him. He talked fast. He was excited.
Some other things happened. He put on the show.
Another man and woman sang in it. She was
so pretty. They were in a big hotel. It was called
Honeymoon Hotel. They sang in the hotel. They sang
in the halls. More people came and sang. The man
and woman went to bed and sang. That was the end
of that show. Well, then the man who sang asked
the woman who sang to marry him. She said she would.
He kissed her. Then they put on another show. The man
and woman sang again. Then a lot of women swam.
They were happy. They swam. They were pretty. Then
that was the end of that show. Then they went
and put on another show. The first man got in a fight.
Then he danced and sang. He was a sailor then.
After that show was over, he asked the blonde woman
to marry him. She smiled. She said she would.

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Barbara Guest

THE LUMINOUS

Patches of it

on the lettuce a geography
on trucks brilliant noises

on the figure a disrobing
radiance like sweaters dumped

on water

weightlifting there in the forest clumps,
striking at the underbrush, digging
past the clumsy curves

Skipping certain passages, taking off
the sweaters

that fir cone found its voice on the path
in the light after the sun came out

the postcard illuminates certain features in the face
the notebook lying on the windowsill,
the spindle back, the broken stem, all richer,

niceties tend to drop, also words like "many
loves" come forward like the surprises of white stars

and the boots step by amazingly on the dried rich clay.

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He swings his racket after it the luminous
the ball nearly swerves into it

those ancient peoples learning to count
surrounded by it, every day

and navigators noting it there on the waves

the animus containing bits there on its subject
perched like sails

the bright rewards for preparing to strut forth
like a diver there on the board forced
by his greed into it.

Many loves changes to many times falling into
the day's lucid marshes

a tap on the shoulder or a first grasping that
object full of sparks

the wilderness untangled by it

the fierceness with which it forged its memory,
its daylight, its absence.

Yes to the point of damages,
yes to the stunning infrequency,
yes to encourage with repetition its repetition,
yes to the sober knowledge of its parsimony,

a few fir cones, sails, the stains removed,
blazes from the paper without lifting your hands.

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Richard Gilman

THE NEW GERMAN PLAYWRIGHTS

"I am a theater person who mistrusts nothing as much as the theater," Franz Xaver Kroetz told an interviewer a few years ago. The assertion brought the young German playwright into some very good company. At one time or another during their lives as dramatists Büchner, Strindberg, Chekhov, Pirandello, and Brecht expressed sentiments of the same order; Ionesco has revealed his abiding disappointment in the life he witnessed on the stage; and Kroetz's own brilliant contemporary, Peter Handke, has made disbelief in the ordinary practices of the theater a ruling element of his dramaturgy. It would seem as though the drama, to a much greater degree than the other arts, requires of its geniuses an at least preliminary attitude of skepticism, contempt, and even revulsion.

The reason for this isn't hard to find. Along with opera, its related form, drama is the bourgeois art par excellence, the one most tempted toward the reinforcement of existing cultural values and so, by extension, of social and moral values, too. The matter is more subtle than ideology or any form of direct persuasion; what theater does, when it is operating to deaden consciousness, to act as a consoling and confirming ritual, is to reproduce an *expected* life, to present models of experience (or wishes, dreams) which the audience has already had and about which it has already come to conclusions. Again, it isn't a question of obvious comfort or palliation; "painful" plays, dramas about suffering of one kind or another, may also be bourgeois—in the sense of being complacent, essentially optimistic, unable to imagine life otherwise than as it has been known—as long as the depicted suffering fits easily into preexisting molds. There

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is a place for suffering in any well-rounded bourgeois education.

In a prefatory note to his short play *Heimarbeit (Homeworker)* Kroetz has composed a terse manifesto for all his work, a statement that reveals the particular basis of his mistrust of the conventional theater at the same time as it sets out the ground on which his distinctive imaginative sympathies rest and from which they seek their objectifications.

> I wanted to break through an unrealistic theatrical convention: garrulity. The most important "action" of my characters is their silence; and this is because their speech doesn't function properly. They have no good will. Their problems lie so far back and are so advanced that they are no longer able to express them in words.

A drama built on silences. A theater of the inarticulate. Such is the ironic achievement of this playwright who is scarcely thirty and has already established himself as a wholly unexpected and astonishing force in his native theater and is likely to do so soon in theatrical consciousness everywhere.

Set until very recently (the change is greatly significant and I shall take it up later) in the urban lower-class and poor farming milieus of his Bavarian childhood and youth, Kroetz's plays offer what would seem to be a chamber of horrors of violence and scatology. A spinster returns from her factory job one evening, goes through her precise rituals of lonely domesticity, and then calmly, gravely, kills herself. A script calls for a man to masturbate and defecate on stage (in production of course the actions are simulated or shown indirectly) and for a girl to foul her pants from fear. There are abortions or attempted ones in several plays. A dog is shot in another; a man and a woman use each other as targets in a deadly game with a rifle; an infant is murdered; illegitimacy, adultery, perverse sexual acts run through all the texts. Everything is dumb, animal-like, without any dimension of "mind."

Knowing only this much, one might properly conclude that Kroetz represents a retrogression, a movement back to a grim and fatally circumscribed realistic mode. Or, on a coarser level of response, such as that which greeted the opening of *Homeworker* in Munich in 1971, when Catholic organizations among others picketed the

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theater and rotten eggs were thrown at its facade, one might see no overriding artistic purpose in the display of such "tasteless" and malodorous material. Yet there seems to me no question that Kroetz is among the most remarkable new writers for the stage of the last fifteen or twenty years, and by new I mean in sensibility, vision, and technical procedure. To begin to know how this may be so, despite the appearance of datedness or crude sensationalism which any summary of his plots and dramatic incidents would present, we have to return to the note to *Homeworker* I quoted before.

Kroetz's great quiet originality lies in the fact of his having broken through, as the note tells us he wished to, a theatrical convention—an iron principle would not be too strong a term for it—that has held dominion over the stage throughout almost all of its history and in nearly every one of its sectors, transcending questions of style and theme and coming almost to represent dramatic reality itself. "Garrulity," he calls it, affixing a pejorative connotation to what we have always thought of simply as speech, dramatic utterance, oral expression on the stage. So unquestioned has been the existence of speech, dialogue, as the central agency of dramatic values, the chief means by which consciousness is shaped in the theater, that to accuse it of being "unrealistic," misleading, a convention and not the precise heart of the matter, is to seem to be quarreling with the very nature of the theater and of drama as a form. Yet we ought to know from our own lives, even if we lacked a theater to bring it formally to our attention, that garrulity—the overabundance of speech, its runaway mode—is designed to hide truth even more than to reveal it, and to mask the hiding: "methinks he doth protest too much" is a response to garrulity having been found out. To speak too much serves to cover up with words the holes in our existence, the spaces of unmeaning or of meaning too painful or dangerous to be permitted lineaments.

It is these spaces, these holes, that Kroetz's plays can be said to offer as their dramatic vision or actuality. A paradox? A contradiction in terms? How does vision arise from emptiness or substance from absence? Well, so nurtured are we on a belief in language as the most direct instrument of meaning in any literary work (and drama, while a peculiar form of literature, an enacted one, we might say, is nevertheless literary) that we find it dizzying to try to imagine how its

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absence or, more accurately in regard to Kroetz's plays, its maimed presence might be more significant and evocative than its fulness. The richer the language, the greater the work, we think; Shakespeare is the criterion and the apex. And this is all very well and true, except for the moment, the repeated moments in the history of the theater, when garrulity takes over, when there is too much being said.

A starting-point for an understanding of what this "too much," this excess of utterance might be, as Kroetz conceives it, lies in another remark to an interviewer that "my figures are incapable of seeing through their situation because they have been robbed of their capacity to articulate." The word "robbed" alerts us to the political dimension of Kroetz's theater, but for the moment the thing to see is that the statement could function by inversion as the most concise possible history of traditional "high" drama, for that might be defined precisely as the *seeing through* of situations, replicas or analogues of those experienced in life, on the stage.

To do this one needs speech, which is to say the power of naming the condition one is in (if not directly then by verbal structures that create it metaphorically; the most "eloquent" plays do it just that way), of making distinctions both within it and between it and other states, and therefore of making it, in theory at least, useful: instructive, purgative in Aristotle's sense, eye-opening in Brecht's, in every case part of the formal stock of human awareness. And, Kroetz is saying, until now, throughout the long reign of the theater as a cultured activity, such a power has been the possession only of the privileged, in an economic sense, surely, but in a wider one as well. It has belonged to the more or less articulate, by definition. Drama in this view has consequently offered us, in a way that transcends subject or idea, a world in which characters, deputies for the rest of us, own from the start the means of making their situations known, of expressing them, so that whatever else a play may be it is essentially a process of bringing this knowledge into the light.

What is more, the knowledge is itself privileged, the self-awareness of those human beings in the guise of stage characters whose social existence, and so whose existential space, is wide enough to permit thinking about, giving names to, and so truly experiencing—although not of course necessarily "solving"—their predicaments: Lear's knowledge that he has lived not wisely but too well; Norah's

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that she must leave her husband in order to find out what she is. If such knowledge is continually being corrupted and turned into bravado by garrulity (in the commercial theater garrulity is all there is) which papers over the chasms and so hides reality at the same time as it seems to proclaim it, the principle remains undisturbed that it is only through language that the attempt to know can be made, and the belief is firm that drama is one of our chief means of organizing this expressive intent.

Now this doesn't in any way mean that there have been no poor or stultified inarticulate characters in drama. The point is that where they exist they have not been at the center of the work and have been surrounded by characters who can speak and so carry the burden of verbal meaning, or else, as in Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness,* O'Neill's *Hairy Ape*, or Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, they have been given a passionate "popular" utterance of their own and so made articulate after all. The one great exception might seem to be Büchner's Woyzeck, yet even this unprecedented figure of the oppressed and victimized possesses speech, broken, tormented, mad if you will, but greatly evocative speech nevertheless. On a more debased esthetic plane the poor and outcast have usually been given an articulateness that is the product of romantic invention, the fake urban lyricism of Odets or the cracker-barrel loquacity of plays like *Tobacco Road*. In any case, the condition of being truly unable to utter one's reality has never been a central element of any play, has never, one can almost say, been a subject.

In place, then, of characters whose command of language is their precondition for being characters and who talk so that we may "appreciate" them (appreciate: to judge with heightened perception and understanding) and so presumably be made more conscious, Kroetz has created figures whose speech does nothing either to bring forward ideas or perspectives on their condition or to cover it up, and in fact only "expresses" it negatively by its injured or inadequate quality. They seem to speak only because people do speak, struggling to find some connection between words and the internal conditions or facts of the world which make up their situations; they speak, one feels, because not to speak at all would be the conclusive evidence of their despair.

In the opening scene of *Michi's Blood*, a scene which with charac-

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teristically quiet irony Kroetz calls *Table Conversation*, a man and a woman, lovers or at least sexual intimates, exchange these words:

Mary: Once we've got a room you can go to the john.
Karl: 'Cause it's cold there.
M: A person just can't take everything lying down.
K: Right.
M: 'Cause you're a filthy pig.
K: That's what you are, what's that make me?
M: You're off your rocker.
K: That's what you are, what's that make me?
M: You're horny, but you can't get it together.
K: That's what you are, what's that make me? I don't give a shit.
M: Don't eat if it don't taste. Think I'd stop you?
K: Not you, cause I wouldn't ask.
M: Don't bother eating if it don't taste.
K: Tastes O.K.
M: You don't love me no more. That's it.
K: If you're so smart.

Later, after the woman has revealed her pregnancy, the man gives her a crude abortion. A scene called *Finding the Truth* goes as follows, in its entirety:

M: Can I tell you something?
K: Why not.
M: I've got a pain.
K: Then pull yourself together, you'll manage, just don't think about it.
M: Right. One should never lose hope.
K: So what do you want?
M: I just don't know anymore.
K: Probably something stupid anyhow.
M: Right. 'Cause I forgot.
K: Always gotta add your two bits.
M: Why?
K: There!
M: 'Cause I'm human too.
K: That's something.

Now the painfulness of these exchanges arises both from their substance, naturally, but even more from their relation to the play's

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events or, more accurately, the expected significance of those events and their "values." In the first scene the quarreling lovers (if we can call them that—their relationship mocks all the classic, lyrical attributes of the word) stumble verbally round one another, exchanging blows of sad, depleted forcefulness, blows without point, delivered in the dark. The clichés, the repetitions of banalities, the bromides all testify to the stricken nature of their speech, not so much its lack of expressiveness—that is obvious—as the entire absence of originality, the queer and terrifying sense it gives of not having been created by them but of having instead passed through them, as it were. It is as though their language has been come upon, *picked up*, scavenged from the grey mindless stretches of a mechanical culture.

In the second scene the pathos of this derivative, radically inappropriate speech is still deeper. We know from what has gone before that the woman is anguished over the abortion, or rather we have to intuit it since she is wholly unable to express it in terms we would think appropriate. The man, for his part, is embarrassed, frightened, bellicose; but once again these emotions and attitudes have no appropriate style, no diction we can accept as directly constituting the experience, the way traditional drama has always organized its effects. The clichés and fragmented responses, the sad aphoristic wisdom ("One should never lose hope!" Kroetz's plays are full of such sayings in the mouths of victims) move to fill the space between feeling and event, but the gap remains intact. And it is from this abyss that there rises the extraordinary sense in the spectator of being present at a sort of fatal accident, a crack-up at the edge of truth. "Cause I'm human too," the woman says. We know she is, but the sorrowfulness of the remark is that she has been injured past the capacity to demonstrate it.

If the damaged speech of Kroetz's characters is their most striking departure from conventional stage figures, it doesn't mean that the physical in his work is any less original. If anything, the physical action in these plays is more mysterious and disturbing than the verbal, not so much in its substance as in the ways it is disposed. Where the connection between speech and physical action in traditional drama might be said to be that of comment and reciprocity—an "acting" out of the verbal, a "speaking-out" of the material, in Kroetz's plays this relationship is ruptured; the two orders of expres-

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siveness never fuse, never offer direct perspectives on one another. Nothing is done as a *consequence* of something having been said, or the other way round.

The clue to this strange new relationship of speech and act lies in Kroetz's remark about the most important "action" of his characters being their silence. For these silences, the gaps within or the truncations of their speech, make for an almost unbearable tension on the stage, a pressure of the unsaid—of the unable to be said—that weighs upon every movement or gesture, and all potential ones, and infuses them with a quality of extreme nakedness, radical isolation. Bereft of the "cultural" covering in which dramatic actions are ordinarily sheathed, the matrix of articulated ideas, attitudes, perceptions, comment and so on, these physical events take place, so to speak, inexplicably, like eruptions from the darkness, pure, horrifying acts of discrete and seemingly motiveless violence.

The most extreme of them, the murders, rapes, assaults that fill his plays, come at a point when the felt inadequacy of the characters' language, the frustration they cannot name (and still worse, cannot even imagine with a name, since that would be to possess some part of the language whose lack is their very condition) bring his characters to pass over the boundaries of the "civilized." It is as though the tension created by their inarticulateness, the profound occlusion of consciousness in them, can only give way to the "reliefs" of brutal motions, to a catharsis in which nothing is purged but something infinitely painful is, at least, attested to.

This deeply subtle relationship of speech and gesture in Kroetz's plays, this atmosphere made up so largely of the implicit and unannounced, make their strange power and effectiveness unusually difficult to convey through brief quotation or the description of single actions. Still, a scene such as the following one from *Farmyard* offers us a narrow way into the depleted, stricken world his imagination has come upon. A middle-aged farmhand has taken the young, retarded daughter of his employer to a country fair. They take a ride on the "ghost-train" and when they emerge from the tunnel the girl is evidently in distress:

Sepp: What's the matter?
Beppi: (Walks stiffly.)

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S: Something's hurting you?
B: (Denies it.)
S: You dirtied your pants. You did. Come on now. Were you scared?
B: (Completely confused.)
S: Come on now we'll clean you up. (They go behind a tent or away from the crowd.) Here now let's clean you up. Here, wipe yourself with these leaves. (She cleans herself, diarrhea runs down her legs.)
S: You shit your pants. Here let me. (He cleans her up.) Take off your pants, you can't do it that way. (Beppi cleans herself with his help.) Wipe yourself with this. Here let me. (He takes his handkerchief and wipes her with it.) It's all right again. Come here. (He takes her and deflowers her.)

The scene is of course harsh, unsettling, "embarrassing" to witness. But what strikes one throughout is the entire inability of the girl to speak about or to the situation (although she is slightly retarded, she is in no sense a mute) and the man's extreme matter-of-factness in his speech to her, a matter-of-factness that is greatly at odds with what the theatrical spectator is conditioned to expect and that prepares the way for the brutal abruptness with which he takes the girl's virginity. The cold terse stage direction in which this is indicated is an exemplary instance of Kroetz's methods (if that is the right word; I would prefer to say his angle of vision): the absence of either preparation or aftermath, the refusal of comment, the sudden, isolated, terrifying act of violence. An actor or director might wish, out of obedience to notions of proper "theatricality," to insert some stage business between the last line of the dialogue and the rape, but it is precisely Kroetz's genius to cut through such dramatic integument in order to present the most naked, unmediated and, to the degree that this is possible, *unestheticized* gesture and image.

This cold, grave quality of Kroetz's plays, their eschewal of judgment, argument, and authorial bias, the absence in them of any trace of tendentiousness, of "color" and emotional solicitation of a traditional kind and, finally, their extreme simplicity of incident and iconography, are what so sharply distinguish them from the species of drama we have historically called "naturalistic." Apart from a mutual repudiation of fantasy and the elevation to the status of characters of previously excluded beings—the poor, the outcast—his

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plays have almost nothing in common with the dramas of classic naturalism, Zola's, say, or Hauptmann's. Above all, they do not share traditional naturalism's dream of a quasi-scientific imperium, its enslavement by what Delacroix called "the fetish for accuracy that most people mistake for truth."

By the same token, Kroetz's work protects itself through its internal dispositions, its sense of mysterious fatality and inassuageable pain, from the charge of sensationalism, of an intention simply to shock, although the accusation continues to be made. His plays are as far from *Tobacco Road* or any newer mode of sexual "frankness" on the stage as it is possible to be; they may seem to be dealing with some of the same materials and ambiances, but the difference is of the order of that between C.S. Forester's and Joseph Conrad's treatment of the sea, an absolute difference of size, mind, and moral imagination.

In fact, the disturbance Kroetz has caused, as well as the welcome given to him by more discerning minds, go far beyond the immediate physical data of his plays to the broader implications of his style and the esthetic and cultural significance they radiate. The truth is that his breaking of moral and social taboos, his unhygienic displays and feral anecdotes, are in the service of a far more subversive vision than they mount up to in themselves; his presence speaks of a wider imaginative change in German theater—so often a force for change in the universal stage—than one could discover by a recounting of his "stories."

Homeworker was one among a number of unsettling new plays that appeared in Germany at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies and were the work of a wholly new generation of German-speaking dramatists of whom Kroetz is likely the most gifted and surely the most original. Men born during or just after the war, the group includes Martin Sperr, Wolfgang Bauer, and Jurgen Fassbinder (who is better known in the United States for his films), and while they differ widely among themselves in matters of style and sensibility they also share certain deep affinities. They are all to one degree or another left-oriented in politics; they employ vernacular speech in preference to any sort of literary language; they have set

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themselves against the use of the stage as a source of what they consider debilitating illusion; and, most significant for their creative morale and imaginative independence, they have been freed—by acts of will as well as by chronology—from the previous era of devastated German consciousness.

This group of writers, to whom only for the sake of a convenient identity we might give the collective name of "new realists," constitutes I think the most vigorous and in some ways innovative movement in the theater since the renaissance of the British stage which was carried out fifteen or twenty years ago in the early plays of Osborne, Pinter, and Arden. The more pertinent comparison, though, is to the appearance in Paris in the early fifties of what we have come to call—at the cost of as much confusion as the term new realists is likely to cause—"absurd" drama, the revelatory, unexampled plays of Beckett, Ionesco, and others. For what these young German playwrights have been doing, Kroetz most forcefully among them, is the same kind of life-giving work as that of their antipodal predecessors in France: the extrication of the theater from its own assumptions, from received wisdom and settled notions of what drama is and may do.

These writers make up, that is to say, an avant-garde, but one which neither proclaims itself as one nor bears the obvious distinguishing marks of such an enterprise. There ought to be nothing surprising in this; it is outsiders who usually give avant-gardes their name. And in regard to the signs by which they will be known, it is one of the grand subtleties of culture that the truly newest forms generally owe their animating principles to achievements reached in the past and often appear to us as old, although with a strange, unaccountable light flickering over their surfaces, the light of something newly seen.

In the case of these new German playwrights the debt is to the old and for the most part underground tradition of the *Volkstücke*, or "folk play," which was not, as its name suggests, a work of naive authorship, rising from some memorializing or celebratory impulse among simple people, but the highly conscious creation of sophisticated writers for the theater. Its chief characteristics are that it concerns itself with the lives of common people and that it is written either in dialect or in one or another kind of colloquial language, in

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opposition to the *Hochdeutsch* or high German in which the overwhelming majority of German plays have always been composed.

The form was introduced in Vienna in the early eighteenth century by a writer named Josef Anton Stranitzky, and carried to a full development by the nineteenth-century Austrians Johann Nestroy and Ferdinand Raimund. Then after a long period of neglect it was revived in the twenties and thirties of this century, chiefly by the gifted German writer Egon Von Horvath (whose neglect here—he has scarcely been translated—is a minor cultural mystery). Von Horvath, who died young in 1939, wrote plays whose characters were mainly petty clerks, small shopkeepers, housemaids, hustlers, grifters, and the like, the marginal, tamped-down people of modern urban life, and which were free of the didactic moralizing that had marred the work of Nestroy and Raimund.

Von Horvath's influence on Kroetz and his fellow neo-realists is clear and acknowledged by them, but their most direct and powerful predecessor, as they unreservedly avow, is a writer with a strange, painful history who figures in only the most marginal accounts of twentieth-century German literature and is entirely unknown here. Marieluise Fleisser, who died in 1973 at 71, wrote plays, as well as novels and stories, about the most oppressed of characters, the socially insulted and injured, employing a coarse, ragged vernacular for their speech and exhibiting them in an atmosphere of spiritual desolation. The victim of psychic disorders and domestic turbulence, at various times of censorship, and almost throughout her career, of public indifference, she was "rediscovered" in the late sixties by Kroetz, Fassbinder, and others and has since enjoyed a certain vogue. Before her death she met Kroetz, who has carried her vision and techniques to a much more extreme point. She called him "the dearest of her sons" and went on to say, with an understatement characteristic of both him and herself, that "he cares about the others."

This caring, which is clearly so much more than abstract concern for the victims of social and economic injustice, has, as I have tried to point out, entered Kroetz's work without fanfare or any kind of declaratory impulse whatsoever. And it is just this quality of austere detachment, the placing before us, without comment or the least grain of theatrical seductiveness, of imaginative evidence which makes up a stringent, self-validating dramatic whole, that helps lift

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these plays out of what we might call their "local" status, their possible existence as case histories.

For however specific the milieus of his characters may be, however identifiable they are according to our typologies of social organization, dramatically they exist as deputies (Kroetz's own word for them) for all of us. They have particularly grave afflictions and employ their own blind means of combatting them, but they stand the way we do—the articulate, readers, writers, audiences—in the face of the chasm between language and truth, self-awareness and fate, closer to the extreme edge of course but not constituting a different species. They speak, or struggle to speak, for us all.

Still, the judgment I have just offered is essentially an esthetic one, and the theater is notoriously a place where esthetic reality has a hard time making itself known. Our compulsion to construct moral hierarchies among human beings has been given particular encouragement in the theater—heroes and villains, the absolved and the condemned; it is one of the subtle bourgeois conventions of the stage at which Chekhov, as he tells us, used to "swear fiercely." And though the phenomenon is scarcely confined to the theater, the medium is especially disposed toward the corruption of a "virtue" such as pity into a sense of superiority or, at best, into a mode of proper, civilized, ineffectual response; you pity the sufferer, who remains in place for your pity to exercise itself upon.

In the light of these things the crisis of conscience that overtook Kroetz several years ago is far from surprising. A mistruster of the theater, a man of strong leftward leanings, he had seen behind the suffering of his characters an expropriation, a "stealing" of their language, as he called it. He had seen politically, in other words, and because, as he thought, "my pieces keep producing primarily apolitical pity," he took certain steps to try to correct that. In 1973 he joined the West German Communist Party, and though he has claimed that he has experienced no pressure, that he has been encouraged to write in the "same way as before," the fact is that his writing has changed drastically.

The first indication of this was his having written (a few months before his formal entrance into the Party, but when he was well along toward the decision) an unabashedly "agitprop" work called *Münchner Kindl,* a play about the housing situation in Munich and the

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growing concentration of land and capital in the hands of a few oligarchic families, which contains a direct call to tenants and the exploited generally to join the Communist Party. His most recent play *Das Nest* carries him further along the retreat from his earlier stance of pure untendentious vision as well as, thematically, from his icy tales of the dispossessed. A drama about ecology and the conflict between values and power, its characters are of the middle class and have no difficulty at all in "expressing" themselves.

But perhaps the most disturbing evidence of Kroetz's change is in his having rewritten an earlier work in order to make it conform more closely to his present belief and attitude. This play, originally called *Men's Business* (an ironic title conveying Kroetz's erstwhile deep sense of women as even greater victims than men), ended with a shocking, unbearably painful yet superbly revelatory scene in which a couple play a "game" with a rifle and so allow their mute antagonisms and unfulfillment to find their fatal expression. Kroetz has retitled the work *A Man, A Dictionary*, which comes from a nearly untranslatable folk saying, and much more radically, has eliminated the culminating scene and given the play a more or less "happy" ending.

Kroetz is young, and he cares. We have to sympathize with him in his dilemma and refrain from condemning in the name of "art" what seems to be a movement toward an obvious and unresonant facticity. Some time ago he spoke poignantly of what lay behind his changed position:

> My pieces are oriented on very Christian conceptions: they appeal primarily to empathy, to love among people, to insight, to understanding, to giving something up of one's free will, to improving something of one's free will; they are touching, they do not agitate, offer no solutions, and therefore lend themselves particularly well to being absorbed as a kind of warm breath.

If he fails to see the truly remarkable dimensions of his earlier accomplishment, its revolutionary shift in consciousness and powerful, exemplary beauty, he is surely justified in his suspicions of the

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fate of any kind of imagination in the world of institutionalized culture. Like other writers before him (Tolstoy comes immediately to mind), he is caught between his social awareness and concern and his *prédilection d'artiste*. Whether or not his new mode of didactic dramatic invention will be permanent is beyond even our speculation. Meanwhile the earlier plays remain, testing us, challenging our habits, harsh, unaccomodating, and heart-breaking.

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PLAY

Xaver Kroetz

MICHI'S BLOOD

A Requiem

English Version By
Michael Roloff & Denise Gordon

First American Performance: Yale Drama School, Spring 1975.

I TABLE CONVERSATION

MARY: Since we've got this room only you can go to the john.
KARL: It's cold in there.
MARY: Ya can't just take everything lyin' down.
KARL: Yeah.
MARY: 'Cause you're a filthy pig.
KARL: That's what you are; what's that make me?
MARY: You're crazy.
KARL: That's what you are; what's that make me?
MARY: You're horny, but you can't get it together.
KARL: That's what you are; what's that make me? I don't give a shit.
MARY: Don't eat if it don't taste. Think I'd stop ya?
KARL: Not you, 'cause I wouldn't ask.
MARY: Don't bother eatin', if it don't taste.
KARL: Tastes okay.
MARY: Ya don't love me no more. That's it.
KARL: If ya know it anyway.
MARY: That doesn't help none.
KARL: How's a body gonna eat in peace?
MARY: Am I botherin' you?
KARL: Not you for sure, 'cause I don't give a shit about ya!

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MARY: It used to be different.
KARL: That's all over.
MARY: When ya need someone and he notices, then he don't know how ta appreciate that.—Want me ta leave ya alone?
KARL: I want my peace and quiet.
MARY: No one's sayin' nothin'.
KARL: I've had it.
MARY: Leave it, then we got somethin' for dinner.
KARL: A bitch if there ever was one. It makes me puke when I see it.
MARY: Go ahead, think I'd stop ya? No one asks me whether I like it or not.
KARL: Just you call me a shithead.
MARY: Shithead. Pig, you're a filthy pig. I'm gonna sic the cops on ya. They'll put ya where ya belong. And I worked my heart out for someone like that. That guy got no gratitude at all.
KARL: I'd do it again right now.
MARY: Why doncha?
KARL: Yeah.—Stop bawlin', if ya don't git what I say.
MARY: I understand ya all right.
KARL: 'Cause ya are dumb.
MARY: Better dumb than a pig.
KARL: I jist don't like it no more.
MARY: No one's asked whether they like it or not.
KARL: I've had enough.
MARY: No one's like ya. You're crazy; plain as day.
KARL: Ya can't do nothin' for it.
MARY: Yeah.
KARL: Shut up and keep out of things.
MARY: I've got my rights, too.
KARL: Ya got nothin'.
MARY: You're a drunk and a lush.
KARL: Yeah.
MARY: Antisocial ya are.
KARL: An old bag ya are.
MARY: A bum.
KARL: A slut.
MARY: I'm not.
KARL: Sure ya are.

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II REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

MARY: It's all over if ya gotta drag everythin' though the dirt.
KARL: Nothin's over.
MARY: You're taking advantage 'cause ya have me. Ya take it out on me 'cause ya don't like me no more, 'cause ya can't find another.
KARL: 'Cause I'm fed up with ya.
MARY: Don't think I don't know it. Don't think I'm stupid.
KARL: Ya'd talk different if ya knew the way you looked.
MARY: Ain't got no mirror.
KARL: Go buy yaself one.
MARY: Ain't got no money.
KARL: Then I'll buy ya one.
MARY: It takes a while ta get ta know ya.
KARL: Now ya know it.
MARY: Then explain, 'cause no one can make ya out. What a prick he is.
KARL: Not 'cause I can help it.
MARY: Yeah, a person's still gotta know the score.
KARL: It stinks.
MARY: If only I hadn't got mixed up with ya.
KARL: Yeah, what if?
MARY: Won't say.
KARL: 'Cause ya can't think a nothin'.
MARY: Me, think a nothin'?
KARL: Yeah. Open your trap. Go on.
MARY: I'd have a lot ta say. Your ears'd perk up all right.
KARL: What's over is over.
MARY: There's nothin' left ta say. Right.—If a person knew the score, they'd know how ta change it. Ya better believe it.
KARL: That's a lot of help.
MARY: No need ta pick a fight now.
KARL: I never fight.
MARY: So you're comin'?
KARL: Gonna let me?

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MARY: Why not? All ya gotta have is a little good will. Nothin's so bad then.
KARL: Shut up.
MARY: Have already.

III SOMETHING NEW

MARY: Your eyes are gonna pop when ya hear this.
KARL: That's what you think.
MARY: That's really something, 'cause I'm gettin' a kid.
KARL: You're gettin' nothin'.
MARY: I ain't not got nothin', 'cause I'm pregnant with a kid.
KARL: Where?
MARY: There.
KARL: You a cat?
MARY: How do I know?
KARL: Why open your trap if ya don't know?
MARY: Why ain't I supposed ta open my trap? Somethin's comin'. I went ta get myself tested; somethin's comin'. It cost ten bucks. I'm just sayin'.
KARL: Ya think I'm nuts?
MARY: Don't ya wanna be a father?
KARL: Sure.
MARY: Then that's the way it is.
KARL: When?
MARY: It's been two months.
KARL: There's room for some happiness.
MARY: Yeah. A person doesn't always have ta think the worst.
KARL: Of course not.
MARY: You're gonna be a father.
KARL: Yeah.
MARY: Then it wasn't nothin'.
KARL: No. Ya gotta let people have a little happiness.
MARY: Yeah. Want nothin' but a little happiness.

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IV MAKING PLANS

MARY: Now that you're gonna be a father ya gotta change your ways.
KARL: Don't make my head spin.
MARY: Things ain't so bad once ya see a goal.
KARL 'Cause ya see somethin'.
MARY: I see enough.
KARL: Things look good ta ya.
MARY: Yeah.
KARL: Bawlin', that's what ya can do.
MARY: I'm not sayin' nothin'.
KARL: Better not.
MARY: I believe you; you're the man, I'm the woman.
KARL: Yeah. Just ya don't forget it.
MARY: I'd like ta live on the sunny side; everythin' would be different then. But ya gotta put up with things as they are.
KARL: Right. Ya gotta fit in.
MARY: Yeah.
KARL: All cats are gray at night; that's the truth, too.
MARY: Yeah.

V ORDER IS RESTORED

MARY: You feel somethin'?
KARL: Yeah.
MARY: What?
KARL: A kid.
MARY: Sure. I feel it, too.
KARL: That's the feet, that's the belly, that's the head. Good enough?
MARY: Are ya kidding? I feel it when it kicks.
KARL: So do I.
MARY: That hurts, but it's nice.
KARL: Pain is pain.
MARY: Yes.
KARL: Then get rid of it.
MARY: You crazy or somethin'? I'd never, 'cause it's my happiness. Ya understand?

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KARL: Ya should leave people their happiness.
MARY: That's right.
KARL: Open up now. It'll hurt, but that don't matter.
MARY: I can take it.
KARL: 'Cause ya got guts.
MARY: That's what I think. Now put it in. Ouch.
KARL: Told ya it stings.
MARY: Ouch.
KARL: Don't talk. Press together.
MARY: How long?
KARL: Until ya can't no more.
MARY: That'll take a while.
KARL: So much the better.
MARY: But it don't feel so good.
KARL: Who asks about that?
MARY: I know.
KARL: Feel somethin'?
MARY: Nothin' no more.
KARL: Then the effect's worn off. Let go.
MARY: Yeah. That's the difference. An animal can't put up a fight when it don't like somethin'.
KARL: We put up a fight.
MARY: Yeah.
KARL: Keep it open; now we're gonna do it again. If that don't help I don't know myself no more.
MARY: Doin' is better than just thinkin' about it.
KARL: Yeah. Feel somethin'?
MARY: No pain no more.
KARL: 'Cause you're used ta it.
MARY: Ya get used ta everythin' they say.
KARL: Now ya can let go. All good things come in threes. A horse couldn't take that.
MARY: That's what I think. Inject it now. I'll hold still.
KARL: Feel nothin' at all?
MARY: It tickles.
KARL: It's all over with if ya can feel it.
MARY: That's what I think too. That's what it means.
KARL: Keep it shut, you're leaking.

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MARY: Yeah, so that nothin' spills.—Why ain't ya sayin' nothin' no more?
KARL: 'Cause I'm waitin' for the effect.
MARY: Me too.
KARL: But soap is safe.
MARY: Tell me when it's enough.
KARL: Yeah. Let it out and everythin' is over and forgotten.

VI SETTLING AND BALANCING THE SCORE

MARY: We all gotta go sometime.
KARL: Yeah. You're the best off if ya ain't born, and second best if ya die young. So says Jesus.
MARY: I wouldn't sign my name ta that.
KARL: But that's what it says in the book.
MARY: Yeah.

VII FUTURE AND COMMON SENSE

MARY: When d'ya think I'll be up again?
KARL: I got no crystal ball.
KARL: Right, since ya been lyin' down a week.
MARY: It can't take no longer than that.
KARL: Takin' too long, is it?
MARY: It's stupid. Did ya see somethin'?
KARL: Nothin'.
MARY: But it's not there no more. I can feel that.
KARL: There was nothin' ta see. Take a look yourself if ya don't believe me.
MARY: I believe ya. One should never lose hope. Perhaps it just broke up.
KARL: How?
MARY: Everythin' breaks up in a soap solution.
KARL: Only in brine.
MARY: Also in brine.
KARL: But ya should be able ta see somethin'.
MARY: Then we'll just wait 'til the time comes.

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KARL: Waitin' is stupid.
MARY: If ya see somethin', tell me, I'd like ta see what it looks like, at least once.
KARL: Ya need glasses for that.
MARY: Or a magnifying glass.
KARL: Yeah.
MARY: I'd be curious all right.
KARL: You're nuts.

VIII WAITING

KARL: Whatcha lookin' at?
MARY: I ain't lookin', I'm thinkin'.
KARL: Nothin' important, that's for sure.
MARY: You'd be the one who'd know. Ya scared?
KARL: Ya gonna make a stink?
MARY: Not me.
KARL: Not me neither.
MARY: That's what ya think.
KARL: 'Cause I don't give a shit. But you're gonna kick off if ya don't stop bleedin' pretty soon.
MARY: You'd be the one ta know.
KARL: I know that for sure.—One can never be serious with ya. Ya know about nothin'.
MARY: You're just nervous. We'll make it.
KARL: That's for sure.
MARY: And no one knows nothin' about no one.
KARL: Nothin'.
MARY: Yeah.
KARL: Ya can't look inside a person's brain.
MARY: No. Ya gotta have a crystal ball for that.

IX ARRIVAL

KARL: You're supposed ta press.
MARY: I'm pressin'.

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KARL: The head or somethin' is showin' already. Hold on and press. Harder. It's comin'. There it is.
MARY: Ya got it?
KARL: There it is.
MARY: Ya got it.
KARL: Take a look.
MARY: Ugly.
KARL: A corpse just ain't no child.—Whatcha got?
MARY: Somethin' else.
KARL: Is it never gonna stop?—A blob.

X IT HAS BECOME QUIET

KARL: There's a reason for everything'.
MARY: Yeah. If ya just know it.
KARL: Yeah.
KARL: Yeah.

XI INFORMATION AND SECURITY

MARY: We gotta trust ourselves. Who else we got?
KARL: Right.
MARY: Yeah.
KARL: All you ever say is yeah.
MARY: What else should I say?
KARL: You'll think a somethin'.
MARY: If I keep thinkin'.
KARL: It's better if ya keep quiet, uses too much strength when ya talk.
MARY: I can take it all right.
KARL: Yeah. It'll be okay again. People die every day. That's the way it is.
MARY: That's the way it is. And if it was a girl, what'd we have called her?
KARL: Wouldn't have been no girl.
MARY: 'Cause I saw it.
KARL: Ya saw nothin'. 'Cause there was nothin' ta see.

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MARY: I did too.
KARL: You're living in pictures.
MARY: Yeah?
KARL: You're just bein' ornery. Ya couldn't care less.
MARY: That's not true.
KARL: I got eyes.
MARY: Stupid is what ya are.
KARL: Yeah.

XII THE EXPLANATIONS

KARL: A death that's got no meanin' is no murder. No one can tell me that.
MARY: I'm not sayin' nothin' and I won't let nobody tell me nothin' either. Because I love ya.
KARL: No need to.
MARY: I should know. We gotta fit in.
KARL: That's what ya say.
MARY: I'm not sayin' nothin'.—Ya just don't know me. It's really quiet now.
KARL: Afterwards we'll talk.
MARY: If ya could just think a somethin' to say. All ya gotta have is good will.
KARL: How?
MARY: Just like I said.
KARL: Ya wanna run that by me again?

XIII FINDING THE TRUTH

MARY: Can I tell ya somethin'?
KARL: Why not?
MARY: I've got a pain.
KARL: Then pull youself together. You'll manage; just don't think about it.
MARY: Yeah. One should never lose hope.
KARL: So what d'ya want?

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MARY: I just don't know no more.
KARL: Probably somethin' stupid anyhow.
MARY: Yeah. 'Cause I forgot.
KARL: Always gotta add your two bits.
MARY: Why?
KARL: There.
MARY: I'm human too.
KARL: Christ. That's somethin'.
MARY: I'm tryin' to be serious.
KARL: Ya think I'm not? Ya think I'm any different?
MARY: I know that about you.

XIV RESCUE ATTEMPTS

MARY: They say every minute some kid dies of hunger.
KARL: Want somethin'?
MARY: No. But a person's allowed to talk, right?
KARL: Talk is cheap, or doncha know that?
MARY: I don't wanna know.
KARL: Shut up.
MARY: It's easy tellin' someone like me, a person that's dyin', ta shut up.
KARL: 'Cause supposedly there's somethin' wrong with ya. What a joke.
MARY: You'd know.
KARL: Pickin' on me, that's all ya can do.
MARY: Can't even make a joke no more.
KARL: Ya don't do nothin' ta me, and I won't do nothin' ta you.
MARY: I didn't do nothin' ta you.
KARL: Ya would know.
MARY: If ya'd be straight with yourself ya'd say ya did somethin' wrong.
KARL: Nothin'.
MARY: That proves nothin'.
KARL: Gonna take me ta court?
MARY: That's not what I meant.

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KARL: If ya'd knew anythin', ya'd know there ain't nothin' ya can do wrong.—All ya gotta do is say if ya wanna fight.
MARY: Don't want to.
KARL: I know ya.
MARY: Not really.
KARL: And now.
MARY: I'd be curious all right.

XV NO GOOD-BYES

MARY: Now come here once more.
KARL: What d'ya want? You're a real find.
MARY: And ya don't know what to do with me.
KARL: Right. Ya got guts.
MARY: Perhaps ya didn't need to do nothin' 'cause it would have come to nothin' anyway.
KARL: Nobody knows nothin' for certain.
MARY: Right. That's why.
KARL: Don't ya feel like talkin' no more?
MARY: I do.
KARL: Why bother if it's no good between us no more?
MARY: But we like each other, couldn't we?
KARL: Ya got a soft spot for me.
MARY: Ya ask stupid and ya get a stupid answer.
KARL: What now? Don't ya hear me? If ya can't hear ya gotta feel, understand?

CURTAIN

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Leo Bersani

ARTAUD, BIRTH, AND DEFECATION

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of theatrical reform in the twentieth century has been the devaluation of the written theatrical text. And of course the figure most intimately connected with this project is Antonin Artaud. "We must be done with this superstition of texts and of *written* poetry," Artaud declared in 1933. What is "this superstition of texts?" The text is the most respectable aspect of theatrical performance; it is, we might say, the strictly mental component of theater. The literary text qualifies the physical confrontations of theater (confrontations among actors as well as the spectator's erotic attachment to the actors); it is a reminder that physical presence is not indispensable to the "essence" of theater. Significantly, Artaud connects the tyranny of the text with the tyranny of the abstract. To repudiate the domination of theater by literature is to reaffirm the physical immediacy of the theater. And the primacy of the physical means that even the language of the theater must be different from the language of literature.

Balinese theater was for Artaud the revelation of a theatrical language in which words would be only one element, and not even the most important. In the angular poses of the Balinese actors, in the strange rhythms of their guttural sounds, in their grimaces and calculated muscular spasms, in the mysterious fusions of their voices with the sounds of musical instruments, in the "dance" of the geometrical robes which transform the Balinese players into "animated hieroglyphics," Artaud discovers "the meaning of a new physical language with its basis in signs and no longer in words." The physical elements of Western theater are intended to realize a literary text; they serve that text; essentially, they illustrate and decorate it. The secondary importance of actual performance in Western theater reinforces our sense of the inferiority of the concrete to the abstract: the former carries meaning only to the extent that it reveals the latter. The abstraction is the gold nugget to be removed from the impure ore of concrete reality. What Artaud finds most astonishing in Balinese theater, on the other hand, "is this revealing aspect of matter which seems to be suddenly dispersed into signs in order to teach you the metaphysical identity of the concrete

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and the abstract." The physical elements of theater don't need the support of a text in order to be read as meaningful signs. What we must learn to read in the theater is not the "parent" text from which each production is derived, but rather the irreducible and immediately perceived language of movement, sounds, shapes, and colors.

The devaluation of the literary text is a subversion of character structures. Psychology in the theater depends on the subordination of theater to literature or, more fundamentally, to verbal language. Linguistic structures inspire and cooperate intimately with psychological structures. Perhaps the most striking example in all literature of an attempt to bypass both types of structure can be found in Rimbaud. In his effort to reduce or simplify himself to a series of discontinuous, fragmented scenes—scenes of the external world which wholly objectify the desiring imagination—Rimbaud develops a suspicion of language itself. And this impatience with language is the sign of Rimbaud's impatience with his own being. His radical negativity involves a continuous self-repudiation; no present moment is to be responsible to any past moment. Rimbaudian freedom implies a chimerical escape from any self-repetitions at all. And if the self is to be entirely without depth or historical references, its mode of expression must be a succession of nonstructurable visual "illuminations." Thus, unlike *Une Saison en Enfer,* in which language tells a story, and unlike the *Derniers vers,* where complex musical structures both conceal the poet's inner secrets and yet teasingly confirm their reality, the *Illuminations* are Rimbaud's effort to make language transparent to the hallucinated scene. It is as if he had realized that the particular attention which poetic language usually requires of us inevitably becomes a lesson in the strategies by which language constructs a coherent fiction. And coherent fictions undermine the project of constant self-repudiation: they imply duration, stability, and repetition. Therefore, in order to escape from the temptation of structured coherence in the self, Rimbaud must also escape from his interest in the principal instrument of all sense-making operations —that is, his interest in language. The *Illuminations* are an attempt to depoeticize language, to deprive it of any poetic opacity and to reduce it to the status of an uninteresting, barely noticeable prosaic vehicle which would never infect the visions it carries with its own (undesirable) orders.

There is a striking parallelism between Artaud's theatrical manifestos and the program for poetry—and for being—implicit in Rimbaud's *Illuminations.* Far from suggesting that the physical language of theater should convey the same type of message as the literary text, Artaud emphasizes that to end the supremacy of words is to bring about a radical change in the nature of theatrical sense. To be done with literary masterpieces is to be done with psychology in the theater. "The domain of the theater is not psychological,

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but plastic and physical.'' Now theater is also metaphysical for Artaud, and what he means by a theatrical metaphysic is another question. It's one that his own productions never answered satisfactorily, and in his writings—especially in *Le Théâtre et son double*—the metaphysic of the concrete is often discussed vaguely, and at times it even seems to include notions from the very systems of abstraction which Artaud is apparently rejecting. (I'm thinking especially of his attempt to convince his readers that the violent theatrical gesture is also a ''disinterested'' gesture, as well as of his favorable view of spectacles which produce sublimation.) But in the present discussion we can limit ourselves to what I take to be Artaud's more authentic, and also more complexly ambiguous, gesture of rejection. Jacques Derrida has said that Artaud wants to abolish repetition. This is as fundamental a project in Artaud as it is in Rimbaud. First of all, the subordination of theater to the literary text makes of theater a mere repetition of literature. Secondly, the supremacy of verbal language is also the supremacy of a code which depends on repetition for its coherence. (*Any* code is of course unthinkable without repetition. In a sense, Artaud's project is obviously absurd, but the devaluation of verbal language has important consequences for the theater. Repetition can't be abolished, but the psychology supported by rational discourse can be replaced by a purely scenic psychology already pointed to in the *Illuminations*). Finally, Artaud's rejection of psychological theater is the natural corollary of his attack on logical discourse and on literary textuality. Psychological theater dramatizes self-repetitions which provide the thematic foundations for a coherently structured personality.

But Artaud's hostility to repetition makes him vulnerable to a type of analysis which exposes the thematic continuities of his own life. Part of the inescapable absurdity of the wish to abolish repetition is that the very persistence of that wish, and its various modulations, subvert the content of Artaud's project: he continuously repeats the project of abolishing repetitions. And we can be more psychologically specific about this enterprise. The central theme of Artaud's life, as Derrida has brilliantly shown, is a horror of all derivation. The inferior status of theatrical performance in Europe is the result of theater being considered as merely derived from literature. It is never entirely present to itself; it is always a reminder of its absent and more prestigious source. But this view of the relation between performance and text could be thought of as a sublimated version of Artaud's more visceral revolt against his own derivation from his parents. To be born is to be derived; thus Artaud's extraordinary insistence that his birth was a mistake. For example, Artaud wrote to Henri Parisot on September 7, 1945:

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> I didn't go to the Tarahumaras to look for Jesus Christ but rather for myself, Mr. Antonin Artaud, born September 4, 1896 in Marseille, 4, rue du Jardin des Plantes, from a uterus I had no need of and which I never had any need of even before, because that's no way to be born, when you're copulated and masturbated nine months by the membrane, the shiny membrane which devours without teeth as the Upanishads say, and I know that I was born in a different way, from my works and not from a mother, but the Mother resolved to take me and you see the result in my life.

To be born is the most dramatic example of a substance falling away from itself. The common denominator of Artaud's views on theater, language and psychology, as well as of his rejection of God and his mad claim that he owes his existence to no one but himself, is his revulsion at the phenomenon of dropping. To drop away from a source is to be derived from that source; and derivation is the mode of repetition which Artaud abhors. But it is as if he saw all repetitions as examples of derivation. It is therefore only in doing away with repetition itself that Artaud can hope both to correct the "mistake" of his birth and, like Rimbaud, to succeed in making the present give birth to itself in freeing it from any responsibility to the past.

In Artaud, the revolutionizing of the self implicit in this project is pursued with psychotic panic; and in that panic Artaud makes explicit the terrifying fantasies about the body which inform both his plans for a "theater of cruelty" and his repudiation of birth. These fantasies can be exceptionally useful in helping us to see what is at stake in perhaps all attempts to simplify character to desublimated, discontinuous scenes of the desiring imagination. "The anus is always terror," Artaud writes in a letter from the asylum at Rodez in which he attacks the "fecality" in Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* as being that of "an English snob, who makes little curls of the obscene in himself as if he were applying curling-tongs to ringlets." *Jabberwocky* is soulless because it is without authentic obscenity: "I refuse to admit that one can lose any excrement without acutely suffering from the simultaneous loss of one's soul, and there is no soul in *Jabberwocky*." From his early letters to Jacques Rivière to the hallucinating messages from Rodez, the constant theme of Artaud's anguish is a terrified fantasy of a dropping away of the self. To Rivière, he complains of "une véritable déperdition," of "a central caving in of the soul . . . a kind of erosion . . . of thought." At Rodez, twenty years later, the connection between this spiritual erosion and loss of the soul through the anus will be made explicit. What is the logic of this connection? Why is the anus terror?

We may consider the excremental process and birth as the most appropriate physical models for all ontological reflection about individuality, self-

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repetition, and death. "Caca is the matter of the soul," Artaud profoundly writes from Rodez. Given Artaud's terror of the anus and his revulsion with birth, this astonishing formula is, I think, a condensed way of affirming that excremental droppings are inevitably—and, in one sense, rightly—associated with that "dropping away" from the mother which marks the birth of an individual soul. The connection between the two is by no means only a "sick" confusion between two fundamentally different biological operations. It's obvious that in its pathological form, a fantasy equivalence of birth with defecation involves confusing the vagina and the anus and a live infant with fecal matter. But the very real analogies between the two phenomena are perhaps more interesting. Giving birth and moving one's bowels are both concrete illustrations of that "miracle"—which in fact is a commonplace in the evolutionary scale from the unicellular organism to man—by which one substance becomes two substances. In both processes, being separates from itself.

Now in birth what is separated from the parent organism is new life; in defecation, it is of course merely waste matter which the body can neither destroy nor use. The latter process, while it in fact demonstrates both the living economy of the body and the indestructibility of matter, comes nonetheless to be interpreted, especially in the child's fantasies, as a daily manifestation of the body's tendency to die. It is as if our body were continuously evacuating part of itself, transforming its living cells into dead waste. Artaud remains faithful to the child's view of fecal matter as a loss of life, as evidence of the mysterious amputation of its own living substance on the part of the body. In this fantasy the feces are the visible, externalized form of the body's death while we are still alive. But to be separated from my mother's body is also a form of death. Birth "condemns" me to individual life, and therefore to death; the beginning of a new life is of course also the promise of a new death. The crude physical analogies between birth and defecation—they are both, as it were, evacuations from below—are therefore reinforced by another, more essential, similarity: both evacuations seem to announce death. It is, very precisely, my "falling away" from another self which, by giving me individual life, makes my death inevitable. And in defecation my live body appears to illustrate its affinity with death throughout my life. Thus, to the extent that it is the nature of an individual soul to have the awesome privilege of an individual death, the fate of the soul is prefigured in the body's daily "condemnation" of a part of its own contents as unusable waste. In a sense, the matter of the soul is indeed "caca," and the anus is, conversely, a principle of spiritual terror: to feel the body's waste pass through the anus and to see that waste is to witness a decompositon (a separation of matter from life) to which another passing through or dropping away originally and irrevocably doomed us.

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But of course birth dooms me to death *in time*, and the fantasy identification of birth with death implies an indifference to the time *between* the two. Perhaps only a passionate interest in the "unfolding" of my life's time can soften the shock of that falling away from the self which is intimately connected with death in both defecation and birth. In effect, we might say that Artaud, in his panic, would abolish all temporal processes, and this has important consequences for his revolutionary vision of the theater. To understand this, we should look at some other aspects of birth and of the anus as terror. For birth and defecation are instructive not merely about individuality and death; they also throw light on self-repetition and character formation in time. Birth is the fundamental example in human experience of self-repetition as productive of new being. The infant's parents have reproduced themselves in another individual. The unresolvable paradox of birth lies in this equivalence between self-reproduction and absolute difference. Thus birth is the model of all temporal processes which simultaneously establish continuities and discontinuities. It is the major human experience of difference within repetition, of a repetition which does not simply reproduce the same. On the one hand, birth is the model of all recurrences which make it possible for us to see intelligible structures in the world; all sense-making activity depends on the perception of repetition (or of parallelism and analogy). On the other hand, birth initiates us into the world of diversified forms.

Among the latter, we might include the forms of an individual character. The diversified coherence of a particular psychological history consists, precisely, in self-repetitions subverted and enriched by self-betrayals. And there are, of course, possibilities of terror in this process. There is, first of all, the terror of *mere* repetition, of that monotonous, timeless tick-tack of personality which obsesses Gudrun in Lawrence's *Women in Love*. There is also the potential terror of having to recognize the self in a form alien to the self. In one sense, both the infant and fecal matter defy us to recognize ourselves in a foreign substance. And the history of personality includes numerous shocks of similar (non)recognitions. In literature, *A la récherche du temps perdu* is the most exhaustive document we have of a man's incredulity in the face of what he himself becomes. The most mysterious crises for Proust's narrator are those moments when he can't find himself in the present, when he perceives no repetitions but only difference. Finally, there is the terror of loss—a terror which can be located both on the side of what has reproduced itself and on the side of what has been reproduced. In birth, defecation, and the history of personality, the parent organism dissipates its contents merely by allowing them to be manifested in external forms. The mother literally loses a part of herself in the child; we throw away some of what the body has

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been containing in the excremental process; and in the time of an individual life, the self is lost (it spends itself) among the multiple alien circumstances in which it enacts and dissipates its history. If we consider loss from the point of view of what has been born, we see that the infant suffers the loss of its origin; and, in the history of personality, each new gesture creates another difference, however minute, which separates us irremediably from the permanently identical self which we might have preserved only by refusing any *performed* repetition at all, by refusing time itself.

It is this terror at the separation of the self from itself which we find in Artaud. The anus and birth are subjects of terror, but, if we accept the logic of what I've just been saying, so is the very time of an individual life. The cruel lesson which birth, defecation, and an individual history teach us is that I am never entirely present to myself. As Derrida says, repetition makes a present moment less fully present to itself. Part of what is in the present was already in the past, and therefore the present is, so to speak, partly somewhere (sometime) else. I too am always somewhere else; and all repetition is evidence of my being elsewhere. There are always spaces (physical and temporal) between a present gesture and the gesture it refers to. But there are no gestures from which all the others are derived; every moment in my life sends me to other moments. And, to the extent that I yearn to find an underived origin, I can only suffer from this experience of never being anything but a derived self, one whose differences are inseparable from its repetitions, in short, a self always dropping away from—what?

The answer to this question obviously depends on our views concerning the final term (or the origin) of our myths about origin. It seems likely that the prenatal experience of living in the mother's body lays the basis for the illusion of perfect presence. The notion of a transcendent being whose nature is wholly concentrated in its unchangeable presence is perhaps the most intellectually rarefied consequence of the prenatal confusion of our milieu with our being. We never wholly rid ourselves of this confusion; or, more precisely, we keep a nostalgia for a world in which being would everywhere always be equally present to itself. Instead, the self finds that it is at a distance from the world which nonetheless contains it. It is neither identical to the world nor is it clearly distinct from it; rather, it is always in the intervals between two fictions, the fiction of a world from which the self is absent and that of the self as a center without an environment, or as a fixed, nondisseminated presence. The physical separation of the infant from the parent in birth is the most spectacular evidence we are given of the space between the self and the world as well as between the self and its own history. Birth is the origin of derivation in an individual's life, although this is obviously not the same thing as saying that it is the origin of Artaud's trauma-

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tized interpretation of birth. The (hypothetical) origins of an obsession inevitably get lost in our enactments of it. Artaud's horror of being born may, after all, be the retroactive effect on his memory of birth of a view of defecation, as a loss of self. But such casual origins are in fact impossible to locate. Artaud's hatred of derivation and repetition exist nowhere apart from his performances of that hatred; there is no unperformed source from which all versions of the theme proceed.

Artaud's most urgent need is to abolish the space between the self and the world and that between the self and its own history, to save the self from any extensions or, to use a Derridean term, any dissemination which would scatter and destroy presence. Artaud's ideal, in Derrida's striking phrase, is a "Corps-propre-debout-sans-déchet." Without "déchet" (waste or residue): nothing must fall away from the body. But since the very shape of the body includes a certain falling away from itself, Artaud lives in terror of "the articulated body," of anatomical extensions which decentralize our physical being. And we can now see the most profound logic of Artaud's mistrust of verbal language: words articulate the self, they substitute a system of spaced repetitions and differences for pure presence. (Beckett, as I've shown in *Balzac to Beckett,* pursues the same chimerical ideal. The "characters" in the novelistic trilogy move toward silence, immobility, and even, in *L'Innommable,* a body reduced to—or perfected in—the shape of a ball with no extensions at all.)

Psychology is the attempt to systematize the self's loss of pure presence. It considers all behavior from the point of view of other behavior; the psychological interpretation of repetition and difference assumes the derived nature of all human activity. The antipsychological bias of Artaud's program for the theater is therefore a logical and crucial aspect of his passionate antipathy toward all derivation. It's true that Artaud's rebellion, as Derrida has shown, is ambiguous and even self-defeating. Artaud rejects a "metaphysics of difference" which argues for the ontological inferiority of the phenomenal world by referring that world back to an underived cause which alone enjoys the privilege of full, nonreferential presence. But he keeps the cult of presence. Instead of recognizing that to abolish transcendence is also to lose the hope of any self-contained, "nondisseminated" presence in the universe, Artaud transfers the locus of perfect presence from a metaphysical reality to the phenomenal world itself, indeed to his own body (the "Corps-propre-debout-sans-déchet"). And to his thought; in one of the texts of *L'Ombilic des limbes,* Artaud spells out his notion of what thought should be:

> . . . for me thinking is something other than not being completely dead, it means connecting up with oneself at every moment, it means that we

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> never stop feeling ourselves in our inner being, in the unformulated mass of our life, in the substance of our reality, it means not feeling any essential hole in ourselves, any vital absence, it means always feeling our thought equal to our thought.

Nevertheless, as far as the consequences for theatrical theory and practice are concerned, this displacement of perfect presence is enormously important. Since in the theater the dramatic text plays the part of the source from which dramatic performance is derived, to abolish the "superstition of texts" is the first requirement of the theater of cruelty. To do away with psychological theater is just as necessary: the presence of the theater's multiple physical realities has been violated by our habit of translating dramatic performance into the psychology from which it presumably derives. Theatrical shapes and movements have been the mere "déchet," the "droppings" of abstract psychological and moral truths.

To shift the emphasis in theater from the textual to the scenic implies a redefinition of character and desire which would be as radical as that proposed by the *Illuminations*. Although Artaud never discusses his ideas in the terms I'm now using, his theatrical program is nonetheless an attack on the very basis of psychological intelligibility in our culture. The notion of a structured, unified character is inseparable from the phenomenon of derivation and from a willingness to accept that phenomenon. In any coherent psychological portrait, the unity of personality depends on interrelated traits which are stabilized by their positions in a hierarchical structure. There are dominant traits and there are subordinate traits; certain aspects of personality are derived from other aspects; the self's "extensions" into various activities both diversify and repeat character. This unifying, hierarchical logic of personality is easy enough to see in early psychologies of the humors or of dominant faculties. It is also present, in more sophisticated form, in the psychoanalytic classifications of character traits as derived from fixations on different bodily pleasures; and the same unifying logic governs the judgmental discriminations about behavior in, for example, the Freudian use of such labels as "symptoms" and "sublimations."

Now Artaud himself is not very instructive about the consequences of a rejection of psychological drama. This is partly because his theatrical practice (what there was of it) was less original than his speculations about theater, and perhaps also because his own entrapment in the ideology of presence would in any case have condemned him to a static, monumental type of theatrical event. In his tortured struggle with the presence–absence duality, Artaud seems to have been incapable of imagining a theatrical scene which

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would *neither* refer us to preexistent texts (or to an implicit psychological unity) *nor* merely transfer the cult of total presence from abstract sources behind the scenes to the physical elements of theater themselves. As we may see in looking at some contemporary examples, it's possible to conceive of a nonpsychological and a nontextual theater in terms of a certain *inadequacy* between dramatic presence and dramatic significance. The significance, however, would be literally nowhere, neither in the theater nor out of it; its nature would be more a question of positioning than of content. That is, nothing would ever be designed to centralize—and capsulize—dramatic meaning for us. All the physical elements of theater would be both excessive and inadequate: either charged with energies untranslatable into sense, or de-emphasized in ways designed to make us constantly look elsewhere. And this decentralization of theatrical presence forces the spectator to abandon a fixed, fetishistic attention to actors' bodies which, it could be argued, has provided the principal erotic pleasure of traditional theater.

Repetition has various modes, but it is inconceivable that repetition itself be abolished. The mode which haunts Artaud, and which he tries so desperately to eliminate, both in the theater and his own being, might be thought of as a vertical or transcendental repetition. Phenomena repeat the source from which they derive, and ontologically, the phenomenal world is inferior to its origins and causes. Performance is subordinate to texts; behavior merely illustrates character. There are viable alternatives to this sort of repetition, but it would be difficult to overemphasize its powerful, if frightening, appeal. As I suggested earlier, the connection between individuality, death, and character-formation on the one hand and, on the other, repetition as a falling away from an origin ideally present to itself would seem to be a biologically authenticated connection. Artaud profoundly saw that to reject derivation implies a "refusal" of birth and of defecation. We *are* a dropping away from an origin, which we relive, in fantasy, as wholly adequate to itself; and in the body's wastes, death seems to be produced and made immediately visible to the living. The psychology most natural to us undoubtedly involves us in thinking of visible behavior as proceeding from and illustrating profound character structures. And the successful throwing off of this psychology involves a kind of murder. Birth is a "falling" from above, and so, in a sense, is vertical derivation. (The play is a "déchet" from the text; behavior, a "déchet" from our nature). Vertical derivation is therefore biologically linked to having parents. For Artaud to escape from being a "dropping," he must deny his birth, "kill" his parents. A murder, Derrida writes, is always at the origin of cruelty—murder of the parent, of the all-powerful Logos behind the theatrical scene, and, of course, murder of God. Ultimately, only deicide restores the dignity

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of concreteness to the theater (and to all human experience), for "God's history is . . . the history of the Work as excrement."

Artaud, like Rimbaud, forces us to see the unavoidable connection between the deconstruction of character and violence. Theater is intrinsically cruel—although for reasons which have little to do with the vague notions of "necessity," "difficulty," and "appetite for life" with which Artaud watered down his intuitions about theatrical cruelty. The particular power of theater lies in its immediately scenic nature. While Rimbaud had always to struggle against the conceptualizing tendencies of language, a theatrical performance can return us at once to visual modes of self-definition. Theater is the ideal space in which a regression from the structured sublimations of character can be enacted. No human performance eliminates psychology; but theatrical performance can return us to a psychology of the concrete. In what sense is this return violent or cruel?

First of all, theater allows us momentarily to forget the distinction between the self and the world—a distinction based on the infant's painful recognition that the scenes of his desiring imagination are internal scenes. Desire is mental, and therefore abstract, and our capacity for abstraction depends on our having been forced to discriminate between sensory experience and the fantasies of desire. We can see the complicity of language with this learning process. The most elementary verbal grammar helps us to systematize these discriminations (I'm thinking, for example, of the distinctions among pronouns, as well as of the implicit opposition between concrete and abstract in the difference between the present tense and past and future tenses), and we of course use words to represent—to present once again—realities no longer or not yet present. Thus a nonverbal coincidence of the self with the world is replaced by verbal descriptions both of what we perceive and what we feel, by the transposition of pictorial desire into narrative fictions. Our fictions express, elaborate, and disguise our desires; they sublimate desire. They may also be meant to seduce reality into conforming to desire. Our very willingness to admit the fictive status of our stories about the world suggests a wish to strike a bargain with the world. More secretly, we hope that fiction will have an energy sufficient to transform the world and thus return us to that harmony between desire and reality which would make fictional narratives obsolescent. Finally, we reflect on the nature of our fictive scenes and stories, and finding patterns, analogies, themes—in short, repetitions—in the history of our imagination, we are naturally led to view that history as the display of a coherent character. Desire, blocked in its naïve confusions with the world, repeats itself at different levels of mental activity. A single desire runs through various preferences (prefer-

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ences for certain sexual activities, for certain styles in other people, for particular rhythms of behavior, for particular systems of thought). Repeated and sublimated, desire thus creates personality.

Theater can offer us the extraordinary luxury of briefly destroying this entire process. We can now see that the violence of the theater which Artaud proposes to us is not only a question of patricide (or matricide) and deicide. The theatrical scene that is not subordinated to a literary text can also brush aside the hard-earned knowledge of the world as more than a performing space for my own identity. Theater reobjectifies desire, and when its scenes coincide with those of the spectator's own desiring imagination, it is as if, for a moment, he had recovered the happy illusion that his desires literally possess the world. Furthermore, in an essentially nonverbal theater no longer retelling stories already told in literature, we may also enjoy a loss of the continuities which our verbal fictions have discovered in (or imposed on) our desires. Psychological continuity thrives on the frustration of desire; desire, duplicated and sublimated in ideals and mental faculties, organizes a self. The victims of this process are the fragmentary, the accidental, the peripheral, the discontinuous. The scenic finality of theater allows for the reinstatement of a heterogeneous multiplicity of desire. A mass of memories and fantasies no longer have to be sacrificed to the structural harmony of character. Theater is the privileged esthetic space for structurally unassimilable desires.

But the indulgence of those desires obviously entails certain brutalities. To reemphasize the fragmentary and the discontinuous is to fracture, to wound the self. We undermine a psychological unity which we no longer think of as an inescapable psychic fate but which has performed the far from negligible service of providing us with an identity in the world. Representations of discontinuous impulses express partial selves; the person is dismembered by the very fertility of its resources. And in our exuberant fusion with those scenes which offer themselves, literally, as the theater of our desires, we may also become more readily disposed to violate *any* otherness in the external world. Consciousness liberated from the restrictive continuities of character may also be consciousness abandoned to the brutal if illusory omnipotence of masturbatory fantasies. The deconstruction of character in contemporary theatrical experiments is a complex adventure. Desiring impulses no longer contained by conscience or by a sense of responsibility toward one's own coherence are perhaps even more ferocious than the vengeful desires sanctioned by conscience. Some of these experiments (I'm thinking especially of Robert Wilson, Joe Chaikin, Peter Brook, and Charles Ludlam) have in fact found strategies to tame a desiring imagination which

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they also encourage us to cultivate. A discussion of contemporary theaters of desire—obviously beyond our purpose here—would have to look closely at the consequences of all serious enterprises of psychic deconstruction. For among those consequences, we inevitably find, to some degree, the pornographic tyrannies intrinsic to all desire.

I might indicate, in conclusion, what I mean by this last remark. Desire is an hallucinated satisfaction in the absence of the source of satisfaction. In other words, it is an appetite of the imagination; and the infant, as Freud described him, is already an artist of sorts in the sense that he invents and is excited by imaginary equivalents of remembered satisfactions. The activity of desiring is inseparable from the activity of fantasizing. The brutality of desire has to do with its solipsistic nature: the world it conjures up is responsible only to a personal formula for satisfaction. In a sense, the ideal context for triumphant desire is masturbation. Melanie Klein emphasized the importance of masturbatory fantasies in determining the forms taken by children's play as well as by their later sublimations. And in the writing of Jean Genet, whose Kleinian insights matured far from the analytic couch, we see a striking confirmation of the continuities between fantasies of desire, fantasies of omnipotence, and the fantasies of literature. The paradoxical nature of desire is that it is simultaneously the experience of a lack and of omnipotence: we yearn for what we don't have in fantasies which provide us with ideal (both perfect and insubstantial) possessions of what we don't have. In pornographic literature, characters use one another's bodies with the same freedom from any constraining resistances or consequences as the fantasies of "pure" desire use the world. The cruelty and destructiveness in such literature can perhaps be explained in two ways: they are metaphors for the tendency in desiring fantasy to negate real objects and bodies and to replace them with imaginary objects and bodies, and they may also express a rage against the world (and against one's own body) which results from frustrated desire—that is, desire compelled to recognize itself *as* imaginary.

It is perhaps the role of sublimation, conscience, and character-formation to modify what seems to be the potentially limitless aggressiveness of desire. This aggressiveness seems to be a primary source of anxiety. To live in time is an apprenticeship in techniques for deflecting desire into activities and a personality which are socially viable. Literature is instructive in this respect: scenes of desire in literary works are surrounded by and submitted to *developments* which both compromise and humanize desire. On the one hand, literature hallucinates the world in order to accommodate desire. On the other hand, it illustrates the ways in which we learn, in time, to make what Melanie Klein called reparations to the world for our imaginary

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devastations of it. Literature thus makes a double argument. It invites us to return to that variety of scenes of desire which is stifled by the interpretive tracing back of all desires to a single, continuous design in a supposed maturing of desire. The literary imagination reinstates the world of desiring fantasies as a world of reinvented, richly fragmented, and diversified body-memories. But, at the same time, it also gives ample space to those processes by which we make a continuous *story* of our desires, processes which also teach us to give up the intensities of an infinitely desirable hallucinated world for the somewhat disappointing enjoyments of fulfilled desires.

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Michel Foucault

THE POLITICS OF CRIME

Int: Guard towers, barbed-wire fences, police dogs, prisoners transported in trucks like so many animals. . . . When the first filmed reports of life in a Soviet detention camp to reach the West were shown on French television, these were some of the scenes witnessed by viewers—scenes all too characteristic of our century. Soviet spokesmen at first denied the film's authenticity. Later admitting the existence of the camp in question, they added, by way of justification, that only nonpolitical prisoners were interned there. The response of the French public was on the whole one of relief: "Oh well, since they're only common criminals. . . . " What were your reactions to the film and to the responses it elicited?

Foucault: One early statement on the part of Soviet authorities impressed me enormously. They claimed that the very existence of the camp in plain view in the middle of a city proved that there was nothing shocking about it. As though the fact that a concentration camp could exist undisguised in the middle of Riga constituted an excuse. (The Germans, after all, sometimes felt the need to hide their camps.) As though the shamelessness of not hiding from the people of Riga what they do in that city entitled the Soviet authorities to demand silence everywhere else and to enforce their demand. It's the logic of Cyrano de Bergerac, cynicism as censorship: "You're not allowed to mention my nose because it's right in the middle of my face." As though it were possible not to see the Riga camp for what it is, a symbol of shamelessly exercised power, just as we see our own city halls, courts, and prisons as emblems on the escutcheon of power.

Setting aside for a moment the question of whether its inmates are political or nonpolitical prisoners, the camp's high visibility and the fear inherent in that visibility are in themselves political. Barbed wire, searchlight beams, and the echoing footsteps of prison guards—that is political. And that is policy.

I was also struck by the Soviet rationalization you quoted: "These are

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not political prisoners; they are common criminals." Now, as a matter of fact, the Soviet vice-minister of Justice has said that the notion of political imprisonment does not even exist in his country. The only ones who may be prosecuted are those who seek to weaken the social order and the state itself by means of high treason, espionage, terrorism, vilifying propaganda, or the dissemination of misinformation. In short, he defines as nonpolitical precisely those acts which the rest of the world considers political.

The Soviet definition is at once logical and bizarre. The obliteration of the distinction between political and nonpolitical offenses in the Soviet Union would be a logical development. But at that point, it seems to me, all offenses become political. In a socialist state, any breach of the law—robbery, the most petty of thefts—is not a crime against private property, but against the property of the people, against society itself, socialist production, and the body politic. I would understand if the Soviet authorities had said that there were no longer any nonpolitical prisoners because all crime is by definition political. As it is, we must not only accuse the vice-minister of lying (because he knows there are political prisoners in the Soviet Union), but also ask him how after sixty years of socialism they still have a criminal code for nonpolitical crimes.

However, if we define criminality in purely political terms, we necessarily forego the traditional contempt for "common" criminals that is an essential element of the penal system itself. And if we consider all crime to be political, then our response to it must be equally political. But in fact, the guard towers, police dogs, and endless gray barracks are only "political" in so far as they are sinister evocations of Hitler and Stalin, who used them to dispose of their enemies. The penal methods themselves—incarceration, deprivation, forced labor, brutality, humiliation—are not far removed from those invented by eighteenth-century Europe. Those who break the laws of the Soviet Union are subject to bourgeois penal techniques some two hundred years old. And far from changing these techniques, the Soviets have made them more atrocious and carried them to their logical extreme. What so moved those who saw the Riga documentary was not only the specter of Dachau, but beyond it, the endless procession of human beings condemned to penal servitude—a two-hundred-year-old spectacle used by those in power for the purpose of instilling fear.

Int: I think the explanation of these paradoxes lies in the fact that the Soviet Union claims to be a socialist state but is in reality not at all socialist. The hypocrisy of Soviet leaders and the incoherence of their official statements follows logically from this fact. It has been evident for some time now that if the Soviet Union has been unable to evolve along lines

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that the Twentieth Congress seemed to suggest, it is because the weaknesses in Soviet society are structural and lie in the mode of production, and not simply in a more-or-less bureaucratized leadership.

Foucault: It is undoubtedly true that although the Soviets indeed changed the distribution of property and the role of the state in the control of production, they merely adopted certain power and management techniques perfected by nineteenth-century European capitalism. The particular morality, esthetic forms, and disciplinary methods that already functioned effectively by 1850 in European bourgeois society—its forms of social control—were adopted wholesale by the Soviets. I think the system of imprisonment was invented as a generalized penal system during the eighteenth century and consolidated in the nineteenth century in connection with the development of capitalist societies and states. Moreover, the prison system was only one of the techniques of power necessary to the development and control of the forces of production. The disciplined life—discipline in school, at work, in the army—is also a technical innovation of that period. And techniques are easily transplanted. Just as the Soviets adopted the principles of scientific management and other related management techniques developed in the West, they also adopted our disciplinary techniques, adding one new weapon, party discipline, to the arsenal we had perfected.

Int: It seems to me that Soviet citizens have even more difficulty than Europeans in understanding the political significance of these mechanisms. I see proof of this in the unfortunate prejudice of Soviet dissidents against nonpolitical prisoners. Solzhenitsyn's descriptions of the latter are absolutely chilling. His "ordinary" criminals are subhuman creatures incapable of expressing themselves in any known language. The least we can say about his attitude is that he shows them no compassion.

Foucault: The hostility shown toward "ordinary" criminals by those who consider themselves political prisoners can seem shocking to those of us who think that poverty, rebellion, and the rejection of exploitation and humiliation are at the root of delinquency. But we must try to look at things in terms of their tactical relevance. We must take into account the fact that in the Soviet Union, just as in France or elsewhere, the criminal element is controlled, infiltrated, and manipulated by those in power. Among criminals as among noncriminals, rebels are a minority and conformists a majority. Do you think that a system of punishment that produces recidivism could have been maintained if criminal behavior did not serve some function? Early in the nineteenth century it became obvious

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that in most cases imprisonment turned the condemned into lifetime offenders. Other methods of punishment would certainly have been invented, were it not for the fact that the professionalization of crime created a kind of reserve army useful to those in power for providing services such as prostitution, for example, and for providing informers, strikebreakers, lackeys, agents-provocateurs, and even bodyguards for electoral, and even presidential candidates. In short, there is a historical conflict between political and nonpolitical offenders—in so far as those in power have always sought to implicate both groups in the same base, selfish, and savage criminality.

I do not mean to imply that nonpolitical criminals are the faithful handmaidens of the Soviet regime. But given the extreme difficulty of the dissidents' struggle, I wonder whether it is not necessary for them to distinguish themselves from the others, to show that their cause is not that of the "thieves and murderers" with which the regime tries to identify them. This may be only a tactical maneuver on the part of the dissidents. In any case, I find it difficult to condemn the attitude of Soviet dissenters who are careful not to be confused with "ordinary" criminals. I believe there were many members of the French resistance who when arrested refused—for political reasons—to be taken for black-marketeers, even though the latter could expect a far less cruel fate.

However, if you were to ask me about a country like France, my answer would be different. Here we must point out the existence of a broad spectrum of illegalities that extends from the sometimes honored, always tolerated wheelings and dealings of politicians and the merchant princes of drugs and munitions (who all *use* the law), to the prosecuted and punished offenses of the small-time thief who rebels against the law, is ignorant of it, or even baited by it. And we must also point out the unequal treatment handed out by our penal system. The important distinction here is not between political and nonpolitical offenders, but between the profitable illegalities perpetrated with impunity by those who use the law, and the simple illegalities that the penal system uses to create a standing army of criminals.

Int: But it is also true that in the Soviet Union, just as in France, there is a profound rupture between the ordinary people and those found guilty of petty crimes. I recently saw a program on Italian television that ended with scenes of a prison cemetery where those who die while serving their sentences are buried in tombs hardly worthy of the name. The prisoners' families almost never claim their dead—undoubtedly because transportation is too expensive, but also because they are ashamed. For me, the scene had profound social implications.

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Foucault: The break between public opinion and criminals has the same origin as the prison system itself. Or, rather, it is one of the great benefits that the power structure has reaped from that system. In fact, the hostile relationship that we see today between criminals and the lower strata of society did not exist until the eighteenth century—and in some parts of Europe not until the nineteenth or even early twentieth century. The gap between rich and poor was so wide that the thief—the redistributor of wealth—was welcome among the poor. Until the seventeenth century, thieves and bandits were popular heroes, some of whom remain as shadowy but positive figures in our mythology. The same is true of the bandits of Corsica and Sicily and the thieves of Naples. But in an urban industrial setting, pilfering and petty theft became too costly and these infractions tolerated by the masses began to be seen as a serious threat. At that point, a new form of economic discipline calling for honesty, accuracy, punctuality, thrift, and an absolute respect for property was imposed at all levels of society. It became necessary on the one hand to assure more efficient protection of wealth, and on the other to create in the popular mind an openly hostile attitude toward illegality. Thus with the aid of prisons, those in power created a hard core of criminals who had no real communication with the masses and were no longer tolerated by them. This isolation facilitated both the infiltration of the criminal element by the police and the development, in the course of the nineteenth century, of an underworld ideology. The contempt, suspicion, and hatred aroused by criminals should not come as any surprise: it is the result of 150 years of effort on the part of politicians, ideologues, and police. One should not be surprised either by the fact that the same phenomenon is found in the U.S.S.R.

Int: One month after the Riga documentary was shown on French television, the release of the mathematician Leonid Plyushch focused attention on another all too familiar aspect of Soviet repression: the imprisonment of dissidents in psychiatric hospitals.

Foucault: The internment of dissidents in mental hospitals constitutes an extraordinary paradox in a country that calls itself socialist. In the case of a murderer or child molester, a search for the psychological roots of the crime and an attempt to cure the perpetrator can be justified; the procedure is in any case not illogical. But the dissenter—I mean the one who does not accept the regime, repudiates it, or does not understand it—is of all Soviet citizens the one who should not be considered mentally ill. Instead, he should be the object of political instruction designed to make

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him open his eyes, to raise his level of consciousness, to make him understand in what way Soviet reality is intelligible and necessary, desirable and pleasant. However, dissenters are subjected to psychiatric treatment more frequently than anybody else. Does not this mean that it is not possible, to convince someone in rational terms, that his opposition is unfounded? Does it not mean that the only way that Soviet reality can be made acceptable to those who don't like it is by authoritarian methods —through the use of drugs that affect hormones and neurons. The paradox is a revealing one: Soviet reality is only pleasant under the effects of Thorazine. And if only tranquilizers can make it acceptable, then perhaps there is a real cause for anxiety. Haven't the Soviet leaders renounced the rationality of their revolution, worrying only about maintaining docility? The punitive techniques employed in the Soviet Union reveal this renunciation of all that is basic to a socialist project.

Int: But there has been a certain amount of change in the Soviet Union. There is less repression now. In Stalin's time, everyone was terrified; one day you were the head of a factory, the next day you found yourself in a prison camp. Now, a certain element can act with impunity. If you are an academician, you no longer go to prison. Not only is Sakharov still free, but out of a total of 600 Soviet academicians, only seventy signed the denunciation of him. This means that the others felt free to refuse to sign. Twenty years ago this would have been unthinkable.

Foucault: I agree that the reign of terror has abated somewhat. However, terror is not the apogee of discipline, but rather its failure. Under Stalin, the head of the NKVD himself could be executed as he left a cabinet meeting. (In fact, no head of the NKVD ever died of natural causes.) Change and upheaval were inherent in the system itself. Fear is circular: those who unleash terror inevitably become its victims. But once the ministers, police officials, academicians, and other party leaders become entrenched and no longer fear for themselves, discipline in the ranks below them will function effectively without even the slightest risk of upheaval.

I would like to return to the issue of punishment in a more general sense. The questions of what to punish and how to punish have been debated for a long time. Now, however, we are beginning to ask ourselves some strange new questions. "Is punishment necessary?" "What do we mean by punishment?" "Why is there a connection—until now taken for granted—between crime and punishment?" The idea that crime must be punished is so familiar, so necessary to us, and yet, there is something somewhere that makes us doubt. Consider the cowardly relief of judge, jury,

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journalists, spectators, etc. when a psychiatrist or psychologist tells them not to be afraid to find a defendant guilty, that they will not be punishing the offender, but merely providing for his/her rehabilitation and cure. The defendant is found guilty, sentenced, imprisoned. The court is acquitted.

To suggest an alternative to punishment is to avoid the issue, which is not the judicial context of punishment, nor its techniques, but the power structure that punishes. This is why I find the problem of criminal justice in the Soviet Union so interesting. It is easy to mock the theoretical contradictions that characterize the Soviet penal system, but these are theories that kill, and blood-stained contradictions. One can also be surprised that they weren't able to come up with new ways of dealing with crime and political opposition; one must be indignant that they adopted the method of the bourgeoisie in its most rigid period, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that they pushed it to a degree of meticulousness that is overwhelming.

Their dimensions unknown, the mechanisms of power in the Soviet Union—systems of control, surveillance, punishment—are versions of those used on a smaller scale and with less consistency by the bourgeoisie as it struggled to consolidate its power. One can say to many socialisms, real or dreamt: Between the analysis of power in the bourgeois state and the idea of its future withering away, there is a missing term: the analysis, criticism, destruction, and overthrow of the power mechanism itself. Socialism and socialist societies have no need for new declarations of human rights and freedoms: simple, thus unnecessary. But if they want to be worthy of love and no longer rejected, they must address themselves to the question of power and its exercise. Their task is to invent a way in which power can be exercised without instilling fear. That would be a true innovation.

—Translated from the French
by Mollie Horwitz.

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ARGUMENTS

Norman Birnbaum and Luciana Castellina

THE ITALIAN LEFT: A Conversation in Rome

Luciana Castellina was elected to the Italian Chamber of Deputies from Rome in the June election, for the Democratic Proletarian Party. She is an editor of the daily newspaper, Il Manifesto, *and one of the founders of the dissident Marxist group which bears that name.*

Birnbaum: The situation in Italy is perplexing: a massive Communist vote, a considerable Socialist vote, at least an interesting vote for your own party to the left of these two, and even for the Radicals. There has been a considerable movement of the cultural elites to the left, and of course the Italian working class has very militant traditions. Yet the Communist Party, the key political force in the country, seeks a compromise with a Christian Democratic Party itself on the defensive.

Castellina: First, we know that a left with a majority of only fifty-one percent cannot generate the sort of consensus needed to solve the problems of this country. For a transformation of society we need more than fifty-one percent. There are progressive democratic forces inside the Christian Democratic Party which could contribute to such a transformation, but they are imprisoned within that party, unable to influence its policy. The main interests of that party are conservative. Collaboration with the whole party is impossible, the problem is to split it. The Christian Democrats are not a party like any other; they constitute a regime. They held the state for thirty years, and quite illegitimately developed an apparatus of power. Clientelism, the cultivation of corporate interests, is typical of the way contradictory social forces were kept together by the Christian Democrats' use of the state. In order to liberate the democratic forces within the Christian Democrats to contribute to a social transformation, the Christian Democrats have to be pushed out of the state.

Birnbaum: That seems quite understandable. What is remarkable, according to the voting results, is that some of the left elements amongst the Christian Democrats (which was once a popular party and not just a

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the next issue William Phillips will comment on some of the underlying issues touched on in this interview. Readers are also invited to comment.

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conservative one), moved directly to the Communists. They didn't join with the Socialists, did not form their own left Christian party, did not move to your own party. In one way, we could say that they are moving from one form of integralism to another—without quite developing new ideas about participatory democracy, new forms of socialist culture—which is just what may be happening in the space between the Communists and Socialists in France, not least due to left Christians there. How do you explain this?

Castellina: The explanation is that, unlike in France, the class struggle here is very acute. In France, to be sure, the left is larger than in Italy, and is about to become a majority. In France, however, the state is strong and bourgeois values are still very pervasive in the whole society. The working class movement is not as politicized or as powerful as in Italy. The contradictions in Italy are much deeper than in France, where we could imagine a left government which would not change the system very much. In Italy, by contrast, the left would enter government in a situation in which the bourgeoisie were much weaker: it would change the system. Our own Socialist party, unlike the French one, is not strong, because it is a prisoner of this contradiction. It either joins the bourgeoisie (as it did in the center-left coalitions), or it joins the left: there is little room for simple reform, and the Socialists have to go one way or the other.

Birnbaum: If we accept that analysis, a set of questions arise on the cultural and ideological level. Thirty years ago Italy was liberated from Fascism, and in the generation that has now grown up, we have a militant working class and an intelligentsia influenced by the ideas of Gramsci, which are certainly not the exclusive property of the Italian Communist Party. You also have in Italy some kinds of left Catholicism which now and then break through—despite the very presence of the Vatican as a kind of ecclesiastical police force. Can we see in Italy, through its specific modes of class conflict, the development of a new socialist culture which might have model functions for the rest of western Europe, or for other countries as well? On the other hand, is class conflict largely confined to the direct confrontation of opposing forces in the market and the state?

Castellina: You touch upon a singular aspect of our situation, an Italian peculiarity. In Italy, for the first time in history we may be able to realize what Marx thought about: a revolution that would occur without a Jacobin vanguard, but as the result of a real social process. The assumption of power by the working class is already going on in Italy. We have the embryo of a new state, a new society, a new hegemony, and the revolution will express these forces, will be their work, not that of a vanguard which seizes power and then, afterward, changes society. Before we take

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our Winter Palace, our society will have changed.

Birnbaum: At the same time, not many blocks from where we are talking, there is the seat of a vanguard party, the Italian Communist Party. Through its spokesmen, that vanguard has mounted a major campaign to reassure everybody that for the moment, it is interested in expanding the productive forces of the nation, and in integration with the rest of western Europe. It proposes not a tranquil transition to socialism, but to accept a caretaker function, in a national crisis—which is, in fact, a crisis of capitalism. How can we explain so mild a policy from western Europe's strongest and most prestigious Communist Party?

Castellina: Given the schizophrenia of Italian society, the Italian Communist Party has a quite understandable preoccupation. All the revolutions, all the socialist experiments, have been very bad—and not only those of eastern Europe, which nobody wishes to follow. Then there was the dramatic experience of Chile. This has paralyzed the Italian Communist Party, which is obsessed by what could happen. In this situation, what they are trying to do is to postpone the moment in which they will have to take responsibility for managing society. They are trying to assume responsibility in a very gradual way. But the point is that this could be done gradually, if we had a capitalist system strong enough to accept a gradual transformation. Instead, we have come to a situation of profound crisis of the system, a very, very deep crisis—not only an economic one, but a collapse of the state, and a crisis of the traditional values by which society has lived. In this situation capitalism can certainly survive in Italy —but only at the price of a very brutal restructuring of the economy and the state. This would entail a concentration of resources in the strongest sectors of industry, eliminating all the weaker segments. This would have to be done in coordination with the dominant tendencies in international capitalism. The result, however, would be to make marginal ever larger sections of the economy, more unemployment rather than more employment, less power for the trade unions—who would of course struggle against a reorganization of this kind. That is the contradiction we face today, and there is not just one way to resolve it. There are two quite different ones. One would in fact restrict the productive forces and curtail employment. The other way would see more employment and an expansion of our productive forces—but that would require a different socio-economic system; within the present system, we can't obtain more employment and production.

Birnbaum: I think that you are saying that it is impossible to treat Italy in isolation from the crisis of world capitalism, which is also a crisis of models of socialism, or the socialist movement. Amongst the more advanced

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countries we find Britain and Scandinavia and Germany ruled by Labor's reformism and Social Democracy. The Union of the Left seems on the verge of taking power in France, but it is not yet there, and we do not quite know what it will do once in office. We certainly find an anti-capitalist social criticism and even popular mentality in the United States, but not a socialist or working class movement. It is difficult in these circumstances to think about Italy apart from the global situation. What do you think will be the probable effect of that situation, economically and politically, on Italy in the next twelve to eighteen months?

Castellina: We think that we can expect a political paralysis in Italy. That is the result of the recent elections, in which the Communist Party had a great electoral success, and the left as a whole has had forty-seven percent, which is very large. The success of the Christian Democrats is that they recovered some of the ground they lost last year in the regional and local elections, but that success came from their destroying all the political forces which were their traditional allies. They are now without possible alliances. The Christian Democrats can do nothing without the Communists, but the Communists can do nothing with them. The result is that everyone is paralyzed, and it is dangerous. We might well get a government with the Communists associated in some way, not inside but outside, supporting it from outside. What, however, could this government do? Absolutely nothing, because the contradictions will arise as soon as any kind of problem has to be faced. The problems will fester until they become so acute that they will have to be solved immediately—but at that moment the left's power will have been reduced. People voted for the Communists because they wanted a change, and if things are not changed, their trust in the Communists and in the left will be reduced. In the absence of that trust, there will be disaffection serving as the ground for a counter-offensive of the right. The Christian Democrats don't want a compromise with the Communists, but to immobilize them in order to take the time to destroy them in a weaker condition. That is why we oppose the "Historical Compromise" proposed by the Communists to the Christian Democrats.

Birnbaum: Concretely, beginning with the forty-seven percent of the left, and envisaging the possible inclusion of the Republicans—do you see the possibility of some kind of left and anti-clerical majority in this Parliament, excluding the Christian Democrats? The left and anti-clerical majority would have to work on some kind of transitional program—but is there such a chance?

Castellina: The Christian Democrats are unable to do what they want. If the entire left—the Communists, Socialists, and ourselves—remains united,

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we have great strength. Either we can insist on forming the government together—on the condition that we can agree upon and follow a policy—or we can remain in the opposition, but together. If we remain together in the opposition, we can oblige the small parties to change their position, and we will engender a process of disaggregation and decomposition amongst the social and political forces which are now united in the Christian Democratic Party. That is the ultimate issue we seek, and it could bring about—not immediately and with many conflicts—our aim, the disaggregation of the Christian Democrats. In that sense, this Parliament can eventually have a government of the left.

Birnbaum: Of course, we could anticipate the emergence of some kind of left Catholic grouping based on intellectuals and the working class, now formally with the Christian Democrats. Presumably, to the extent of ten percent of the electorate they would leave the Christian Democrats and form their own party, or in part join the Socialists or Communists. Yet earlier you spoke of the majority of fifty-one percent as insufficient for a social transformation, for socialism. We would then have some fifty-seven percent. There has been an American tutelage of Italy, which we hope will change with the next administration; doesn't the putative disaggregation of the Christian Democrats again pose the question of foreign intervention? Foreign intervention could take the form of economic pressure through the European Economic Community, or it could take other forms—up to and including incitement of a civil war. I take it that this is what Berlinguer is afraid of—in Chile, after all, the Christian Democrats underwent just that disaggregation. What would you say to that?

Castellina: First, let's consider foreign intervention. We can't imagine that the United States would send Marines to Italy: that is impossible. But what could be done would be to bring about a lot of difficulties to strangle our economy. In any case, Italy has to take stringent and independent measures if it wants a kind of recovery from the crisis not now envisaged by large scale capital, a kind of recovery in which we would stand on our own feet, count upon our own forces. This would mean a number of sacrifices. We have to renegotiate certain clauses of the Common Market agreements, so that we can reduce agricultural imports. We will have to invest much more in agriculture than we've done up to now, and the profits in agriculture are lower than in other sections of the economy. These measures can be taken if there is a homogenous political force able to accept difficult decisions: the Italian people, the Italian working class, can be asked to make sacrifices—but only if they see that they have a government which is really theirs. Under the Christian Democrats, they will never be ready to make the sacrifices. In any case, there will be economic difficul-

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ties. The point is to have this kind of mobilization on behalf of the national interest, the readiness for sacrifice, for hard work, in order to change the situation. The difficulties will remain; they won't be solved by gifts or loans from Germany or the United States. The great problem is that the Italian economy is locked into the international economy, which is destroying our own. We'll have to become autonomous in many areas, and our country can be saved only by a deep transformation of this sort. Apart from that, there is no future for us at all.

Birnbaum: Let's shift for a moment to the concrete situation of your own party. You have about one and one-half percent of the vote, and six deputies. Some of you are from the famous *Manifesto* group, others from *Lotta Cotinua* (Continuous Struggle), and there is also the head of the organized unemployed, from Naples. I have the impression that your group functions as the conscience of the Italian Revolution. Its ideological influence, at least on the Communist and Socialist parties, and on opinion generally in Italy, is far larger than your small size would indicate. What future do you envisage for your party?

Castellina: In this election, we experienced a great polarization of social forces and of the political forces around the Christian Democrats and the Communists, the big parties. In a situation of such contradictions, that polarization was quite natural, and there was a struggle for the largest vote. We were the victims of this polarization. Of course, our influence is larger than our one and one-half percent in the chamber. The Communist Party did have a great success, but they are undergoing a crisis in their strategy, and they will be unable to do what they wish. A large discussion will ensue in the entire left, and we think that all the parties have to reconsider, develop a new analysis and a new strategy. Our aim is not to become the party of the Italian Revolution, but to be the catalyser of such a discussion, which will lead to a new *foundation* for the left in Italy, the whole left. That new *foundation* must include one very important element. The left today is organized around the Communist Party. At the moment, the other left groups are small and the Communists are large—but the existence of the small groups makes it possible for the forces which can eventually be detached from the Christian Democrats to join the left. There has to be space outside the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats, and when we think of the left, we think of a differentiated alliance—not just a large Communist Party and nothing else. We think that there is a role for the small parties of the center but they'll have to find room in the left alternative and cannot do so if it is constituted just by the Communist Party.

Birnbaum: That leads to a final question. You may recall the celebrated

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episode in Warsaw, in 1956, when Gomulka had just taken over the party and released the imprisoned Cardinal Archbishop Wychinski. A Communist intellectual rushed into the cafe of the Hotel Bristol, the meeting place of Warsaw intellectuals, and said loudly: the Cardinal has just seen the First Secretary of the Party. Thereupon a Catholic intellectual said, how terrible—now everything will be forbidden. An Italian political scientist once spoke of the Italian system as Bipartitoismo Imperfetto, suppose it now becomes Bipartitoismo Perfetto—two big parties, alternating in power or even joined in alliance. How can there be room for cultural innovation, political experiment, a genuine pluralism independent of apparatuses which have sunk such deep roots into society as have both the Church and the Communist Party?

Castellina: I'm not very much afraid of that. After all, the results of the election do not give a real image of Italian society, whose movement is much richer, much more pluralistic, much more differentiated, than what emerged from the elections. The elections were a simplification of Italian society, but not a simplification which corresponds to the inner structure of society itself. I don't expect that our society can be immobilized or rendered stagnant by any agreement between the two major parties.

Birnbaum: One last word, what advice do you have for us in what is, certainly from a European and socialist viewpoint, politically a backward country, the United States? You did visit our country during the Presidential elections of 1972, and you were much impressed—as I remember from your book at the time—with the innovativeness and vitality of our country?

Castellina: I am still optimistic about the United States. I don't think that everything that was in movement in the 1960s can be perpetually stopped. These things will express themselves even if there is a period of regression at the moment. The problems to which these forces responded are still there, and they cannot be solved by a conservative capitalistic system. Of course, our own experiments here might be very interesting to yourselves, might even help you. . . . But there is one thing I should warn about. It is important to overcome the taboo against the Italian Communist Party. However, the Communists could become something like a northern European Social Democratic Party, and do nothing, and that could allow a counter-offensive of the right on the basis of a new *immobilisme* in Italy. The point is not that the Communists should enter the government, but under what conditions and with what program. There, the independent left is very important.

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Rosalind Krauss

LAS VEGAS COMES TO THE WHITNEY

Outside the Whitney the riggers were moving the twenty-nine-foot billboard of Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* into place. Inside the museum things were not much better. Dan Flavin was sitting in the office of one of the curators, slightly flushed and very angry. He had come that morning with an assistant to install the work he was to contribute to *200 Years of American Sculpture,* the Whitney's ambitious attempt to survey and document this country's sculptural achievements. Flavin's work, *untitled (to the "innovator" of Wheeling Peachblow),* is an eight-foot square frame made of four fluorescent fixtures: two double lights facing in towards the wall, and two single fixtures facing the viewer. Intended for the corner of a room, the work is a meditation on the way aesthetic space replaces and transposes "real" space, for the effect of its luminous frame is to erode away the architectural certainties of wall and floor.

Flavin had gone to the corner designated for the installation of his work. There he had stopped, turned on his heel, and gone in search of the curator in charge. She was in her office, where I was also, since I was guest curator for another section of *200 Years of American Sculpture.* Flavin sat down and said very quietly, "I want to withdraw my work from the exhibition." There was a reason of course; the best of reasons. Flavin felt that to show his work in the place that had been provided for it was going to parody and destroy its meaning, because the corner it was to occupy gave directly onto another work that was already in place; and that work, by Lucas Samaras, was sheathed by a wall of mirrors.

"You thought it would be very amusing," Flavin said. "You thought that with some colored lights and a facing wall of mirrors you could create a corridor which would produce a little miniature of the Las Vegas Strip. Didn't you?"

Flavin's question was addressed to the architect in charge of the general exhibition, who had been called in to the curator's office. What followed then were repeated denials by the architect to repeated accusations by

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Flavin. The architects, he maintained, wished to transform the physically and aesthetically discrete work of two separate artists into a synthesis of the architects' own making. That synthesis, in violation of the meaning of the sculptures, was to express ideas of the architects about which Flavin was perfectly well informed. For these architects—Venturi and Rauch—were intent on "learning from Las Vegas" (the title of a book they published on the subject in 1972).

The lessons of Las Vegas were everywhere at the Whitney. They began with the pop-up *Greek Slave* over the canopy and extended to the plastic mega-sign in the lobby through which the underwriters of the show (government and commercial) were given a place in the electric sun. ("Las Vegas as a Communication System: Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas, Free Aspirin —Ask Us Anything, Vacancy, Gas"—*Learning from Las Vegas.*)

The lessons continued into the upper floors in the photomural that surrounded the David Smiths like a vast billboard; and in the way that most of the sculpture was lit. ("The gambling room is always very dark . . . Space is enclosed but limitless, because its edges are dark. Light sources, chandeliers, and the glowing, jukeboxlike gambling machines themselves are independent of walls and ceilings. The lighting is antiarchitectural. Illuminated *baldacchini,* more than in all Rome, hover over tables in the limitless shadowy restaurant at the Sahara Hotel"—*Learning from Las Vegas.)* In the Whitney's galleries, the general level of illumination was a perpetual dusk from which the sculpture was picked out by means of spotlights. Inasmuch as sculpture is a three-dimensional art, often involving subtle changes of level wrought by careful modeling and resulting in internal complexities of depth, there could not be a more injurious technique for lighting it than the use of spots, which flatten the works to silhouettes, which create, within those contours, intensely devisive and raucously cast shadows.

And, on the top floor there was the lesson that Flavin was learning and that Carl Andre was to learn the following day. In Andre's case it was not a question of placing his work in cacophonous juxtaposition with another sculpture, but fouling it with architectural distractions. Venturi had assigned to Andre's highly reflective, copper floor-sculpture a place directly below both the glowing red sign of an exit door and the eccentrically shaped opening of Marcel Breuer's window. Like Flavin, Andre simply withdrew his sculpture from the exhibition.

As curators, we stood by helplessly watching it all happen, for the architects had been given total control. The fact that we had selected the contents of the exhibition, had written about the works, and were therefore in possession of some kind of information about how they should be seen, did not seem to make much difference. Tom Armstrong, the director of the

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Whitney, told the curators that they would not be admitted onto the floors during the process of installation; and he had vested in Venturi the power of presenting these works to the public. Venturi was determined to do this in his own way. The premises which serve as foundations for that way are what concern me here.

Sprinkled throughout *Learning from Las Vegas* are disclaimers of interest in the human content of the authors' subject:

> Las Vegas is analyzed here only as a phenomenon of architectural communication. Just as an analysis of the structure of a Gothic cathedral need not include a debate on the morality of medieval religion, so Las Vegas's values are not questioned here. The morality of commercial advertising, gambling interests, and the competitive instinct is not at issue.

Yet the book is filled with deductions about the nature of space appropriate to contemporary society, derived from the structure of one of the gambling capitals of the world.

In analyzing Las Vegas, Venturi finds that its environment is antispatial ("the dominance of signs over space"), antistructural ("the graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape"), and antitemporal ("time is limitless, because the light of noon and midnight are exactly the same"). If this environment produces any psychological effects, Venturi is not really interested for, as he has said, his aim is not to pass judgments. Only once does he allow a remark on the effect induced by the big casino:

> The intricate maze under the low ceiling never connects with outside light or outside space. This disorients the occupant in space and time. He loses track of where he is and when it is.

That the builders of the Vegas casinos should have constructed an environment perfectly suited to the needs of their occupants is hardly surprising. Nor is it news that those requirements should be disorientation with regard to space and time. In the essays that comprise his *Paris—Capital of the 19th Century,* Walter Benjamin describes the spread of gambling within the middle class in the 1850s and 1860s equating the game of chance with the procedures of the factory assembly line. Both result in a destruction of time, or at least the purposive nature of psychological time, in that both involve repeated actions fundamentally severed from the ones that preceed or follow them. Benjamin writes:

> Gambling even contains the workman's gesture that is produced by the automatic operation, for there can be no game without the quick move-

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> ment of the hand by which the stake is put down or a card is picked up. The jolt in the movement of a machine is like the so-called *coup* in a game of chance.

The futility and the automatism of the actions of gambler and unskilled laborer mirror each other, and from both there arises the image of "shock" by which the temporal slate is repeatedly wiped clean. The ritualized time of the gambler is about distraction, as Baudelaire says in "Le Jeu"; it is about the extinction of consciousness. "It is the *antithesis* of time in hell," writes Benjamin, "the province of those who are not allowed to complete anything they have started."

The banner most appropriate to raise over the extinction of consciousness is the sign that the medium of consciousness—language—has itself been rendered inorganic, univalent, rigid. In the logo of the consumer product, language is delivered up to the fetishism which the nineteenth-century consumer class had begun to lavish on the commodity object. And indeed, it is logo-fetishism that is the primary lesson that Venturi learns from Las Vegas. The huge flashing signs of Las Vegas form a network that replaces the parameters of space understood at a human scale: "Styles and signs make connections among many elements, far apart and seen fast. The message is basely commercial; the context is basically new." Las Vegas is, he says in one of those perversions of language with which technologists have made us familiar, "a communication system." And the space of the logo-fetish, in which works of art are reduced to univalent signs that flash at one another, into one another, and out at the viewer, was what Venturi created at the Whitney. The lighting, the placement, the mutual interference, all became part of an atmosphere of distraction, a decor through which one moved as if in a trance.

For Venturi, this ambiance of a debased consciousness is not inappropriate for the viewing of works of art. His sensibility was formed, or rather reaffirmed, by his experience of pop art, which he has read as a sophisticated permission to redefine aesthetic choice as a submission to the impersonal will of the mass market. That this populist view of the meaning of pop art is seriously disrupted by any sustained experience of the work of Johns, or Lichtenstein, or Oldenburg, etc. has never really troubled Venturi. Yet the pop artists involved themselves with the products of a consumer culture from within the equivocating cycles of irony. And in this exploitation of irony, they attempted to show in what ways a language of representation differs from a language of pure advertisement.

For art is a communication of another kind. It attempts to infiltrate the inorganic object with the substance of discourse. Art is not only the product

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of certain material conditions, but has as well the capacity to be *about* those conditions, to reflect upon them, and in this process of reflection to mirror the procedures of consciousness. Insofar as it can maintain this position as an analogue of consciousness, the work of art can place itself at some kind of tangent to the process by which a society transforms its artifacts into commodities.

Indeed, the problem of outflanking that process runs as a subtext within the recent history of sculpture. Some of the strategies devised by the sculptors of the past decade—Flavin and Andre among them—were specifically aimed at this question. The use of cheap, debased materials, like firebricks or fluorescent tubes was one such tactic. Another was an increase in the scale of sculpture beyond the point where it could possibly be housed for use as private decoration. Another, that of earthworks, was to locate the work outside the reach of private acquisition.

By and large, however, the context demanded by these sculptures is one of a neutral, unornamented, unobstructed space. It is a locale which is intended to stand for "place," in that its dimensions relate to human scale, and its configuration relates to that commonplace of human habitation: the room. This place is then asked to represent the conditions of space-at-large, against which these sculptures can establish themselves as a system alongside that of the world. As analogues of consciousness, which though it is *in* the world and *of* the world, is also capable of making propositions *about* the world, these sculptures are not wholly assimilable to the condition of the inorganic.

To disrupt the neutrality of that space, to transform it into the network of the logo-fetish, is to violate the work it might contain. Andre and Flavin, understanding this, removed their works from *200 Years of American Sculpture*. For the rest of us, there was nothing to do but "learn from Las Vegas."

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BOOKS

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

OUT OF MY SYSTEM: PSYCHOANALYSIS, IDEOLOGY, AND CRITICAL METHOD. By Frederick Crews. Oxford University Press. $10.00.

Frederick Crews's book was originally conceived as a series of inquiries into the methodology of psychoanalytic criticism. However, in the eight years during which these essays were written, the author's attitude towards psychoanalysis and its application to literature has become increasingly conflicted and uncertain. Crews was also distracted from his original intention by the events and enthusiasms of the late sixties. The book contains several pieces dealing with the radical students and the universities and essays on Norman O. Brown and Wilhelm Reich. The attitudes in these chapters are also extremely conflicted; the essays, as the author points out in his preface, "quarrel, not just with adversary views, but with one another."

Crews attempts to make a virtue of these contradictions: he describes the book as "an evolving document, an oblique case history of sorts." Taken together, however, the essays create less the effect of a reasoned self-scrutiny than of an impacted and paralyzing ambivalence. Chapters not only quarrel but cancel one another out. Several individual pieces seemed brilliant when they first appeared in periodicals; here they are overwhelmed and negated by a general sense of intellectual confusion and inhibition.

In the first essay on radical politics in the university, published in 1969, Crews rejects Lewis Feuer's view of the students as merely oedipal rebels, although he is troubled by their provocative tactics. Another piece from the same year asserts that recent literary criticism, in its exclusively aesthetic orientation, implicitly supports the values of monopoly capitalism. A third essay, published three years later, does a total about-face. Here Crews sees the Movement primarily as an adolescent rebellion and writes with withering irony of those who politicize literary study. These essays came out of a chaotic period, and one recognizes in them some of one's own confused

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feelings, but the total reversals of judgment are disconcerting. In a book of this kind, one hopes to have confusions clarified, rather than merely reflected. What is particularly disturbing is the sense that a vocabulary of issues and ideas is being used to cloak inarticulate sympathies and antipathies, emotional attitudes that are never really understood. Crews's divided sympathies work to better effect in chapters on Brown and Reich, largely because the ambivalent feelings are explored and resolved in each essay. The simplifications of Freudian theory proposed by both men are rejected; history, repression, and rationality will not go away because we want them to.

The most complex and interesting aspect of the Crews "case history" is the evolution of his feelings about psychoanalysis, the principal "system" of the title. Although Crews is the author of a psychoanalytic study of Hawthorne, *The Sins of the Fathers* (New York; Oxford, 1966), his ambivalence about psychoanalytic method seems to have begun early. The first essay in this collection, "Can Literature Be Psychoanalyzed?" is a sort of primer of psychoanalytic criticism, in which Crews answers the most frequent objections to the method in a lucid and balanced way, although not without defensiveness: he begins by deprecating Freud's views on art and his "competitive and ambivalent remarks about artists." Apparently Crews feels the need to apologize even as he evangelizes, and the mixture of intentions is a somewhat uneasy one.

Unfortunately there is only one example here of the actual practice of psychoanalytic criticism—a fine essay on Conrad. Another impressive piece concerned with psychoanalysis, "Anaesthetic Criticism," is an attack on the intellectual timidity and the fear of extraliterary ideas in English departments, which Crews attributes partly to the influence of Northrop Frye. Crews points out that the usual English curriculum is a random mixture of literary history with various critical "approaches," all assumed to be equally valid. In order to become a coherent discipline, literary study would require a "differential evaluation of various styles of inquiry according to their relative success in making sense of the objects studied." In eclecticism and withdrawal from theory, Crews sees a fear of unrecognized aspects of literary experience, a disregard for knowledge, and a cause of the pervasive loss of confidence in literary studies.

As a remedy, he proposes a concept of literary study as part of a larger humanism concerned with "man as an evolved species embarked on a unique . . . experiment in the substitution of learning for instinct." In this framework, the psychoanalytic conception of the work of art as mediating between the claims of instinct and culture would be of crucial interest to the literary humanist.

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This inspiring argument for the value of psychoanalytic criticism contains, however, the seeds of disillusion. Although Crews rejects the oversimplified conflict-defense models and glib psychoanalytic formulations of Norman Holland, he seems to hope nonetheless that psychoanalysis can somehow make of literary study a systematic discipline capable of arriving at more certain knowledge of its objects—a hope that is bound to be disappointed.

In the last essay, "Reductionism and Its Discontents," the inevitable disenchantment sets in. Crews maintains that he still believes in valid uses of psychoanalytic criticism, but he cannot dispel "the suspicion that psychoanalysis is, as its opponents have always said, inherently reductionistic." In any case, it has obviously failed to fulfill the high expectations of "Anaesthetic Criticism." Crews himself recognizes in his ventures into ideology an excessive need for an explanatory system; in renouncing this need, evidently he must also reject the system.

But there is almost certainly a more familiar reason for this withdrawal from psychoanalysis. Freudian method finds in works of art sexual and aggressive wishes, infantile factors, and potentially pathological elements. Even in the first essay, Crews is troubled by this: "Such an emphasis is insulting to the artist. . . . And the insult is compounded by its success." Ego psychology isn't much help; even though the critic stresses the adaptive and integrative powers of the authorial ego, his analysis must inevitably return to unconscious themes "in all their rawness."

Evidently what remains most distressing about psychoanalytic method is this "rawness" of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis continues to remind us of the persistence of infantile conflict, of the power of sex and aggression, and of the insubstantial borderline between pathology and normalcy. The "conflict-free sphere of the ego" does not seem entirely capable of creating a work of art on its own; Apollo can't do without Dionysus, despite the best efforts of the ego psychologists.

What, then, is the psychoanalytic critic to do? Crews advises him to keep in mind a long list of strictures: Freudian reasoning always discovers the same themes, deals only with desire and defense, has a penchant for debunking, etc. In his preface, Crews writes that he wishes "not to dispense with Freud, but on the contrary to mark out a territory within which he remains indispensable." By the end of the book this territory looks about the size of a postage stamp, and it is hard to believe that Professor Crews will be standing on it much longer. It will be interesting to see where he goes now in his search for a system to get into and out of.

The defection of one of its most intelligent defenders and practitioners

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raises, of course, the larger issue of the future of psychoanalytic criticism itself, whose course never has and probably never will run smooth. It is in the very nature of psychoanalysis, whether applied to literature or to living persons, that its discoveries should arouse resistance of some kind—indignation, derision, at the very least uneasiness. And few psychoanalytic critics have succeeded in finding a vocabulary and method that can uncover the primitive elements in works of literature while at the same time accounting for the transformations of form and meaning wrought by the ego. Yet it was Freud himself, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, who taught us to see the multiple significance and virtually endless complexity of mental productions. In discussing symptoms and especially dreams, Freud continually speaks of them as texts to be interpreted. In doing so he made us aware of new possibilities of meaning in every kind of text. It will be a peculiar irony if the difficulties presented by psychoanalytic method and by our own resistances to it should lead us to renounce those possibilities in the study of our richest and most valuable texts, the great works of literature.

ELIZABETH DALTON

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

POLITICS AND CRIME. By Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Seabury Press. $6.95.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS INDUSTRY. By Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Seabury Press. $6.95.

Born in 1929, poet and ideologue, admirer of Brecht and Walter Benjamin, Enzensberger is a child of the German catastrophe. Conscripted into the last-ditch *Volkssturm* at the age of sixteen—Grass, with whom Enzensberger is in chronic disagreement, shared this experience, I recall—he served as a translator for the RAF before embarking on his bourgeois destiny: nine years of higher education. It was then apparently, that he enrolled in a different *Volkssturm,* the shock-troops of the ungrateful, and emerged as the Federal Republic's most intransigently radical literary voice.

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His poetry is not our main concern here, except in one respect. I have noticed—have painfully wrestled with the same disease in myself—that modern writers of the European Left whose talents, interests, and energies are both "artistic" and intellectual, who oscillate between fiction, poetry, or drama on the one hand, and the political-ideological essay on the other, do tend to banish all artistry, all humor, indeed all humility from the harsh, flat, remorselessly rationalist prose by which they expose the scandalous disparity between the real and the ideal. Sartre, it is true, brought an artist's insights and recognizable human smells to the pages of *Saint Genet* and *Being and Nothingness*, but Brecht, the modern German writer with the most profound impact on Enzensberger, hurried from the quick, physical, colloquial atmosphere of the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm to his study, where he indulged in the relaxation of confiding to his notebook dry and categorical dogmas that no actress could possibly absorb and yet remain sane. (As he knew.)

This is Enzensberger's problem, too: a prose in search of a truly human future, but without a truly human phrase. The theoretician keeps the poet at arm's length; instead of "he lolls in the supermarket/under the plastic sun/the white patches on his face/are rage, not consumption" (the opening lines of "portrait of a house detective") the essayist Enzensberger writes:

> The contradictions which the ecological ideologies attempt to suppress in their global rhetoric emerge all the more sharply the more one takes their prognoses and demands at their face value.

Or:

> The proposition concerning the nonsimultaneity of the simultaneous is realized by training the clientele to become a vanguard.

Words which bear, roughly, the same relationship to the people sweating behind their iron mask as chess pieces do to real peons and adventurers on horseback.

Despite his immense intelligence and—my prejudices announce—generally impeccable political judgment, this challengingly gifted poet seems to share the general Left Continental horror of acknowledging that a question of taste, in poetry as well as food, is quite liable to be just a question of taste. In his essay "Poetry and Politics," for example, he cites several examples of sickeningly sycophantic poetry from the time of Plato to Johannes Becher's eulogy to Stalin, then hurries to insist: "The root of the scandal does not lie where it is usually sought: it lies neither in the person of him

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who is praised nor him who praises." Evidently a third person is also ruled out of account—the reader—for Enzensberger goes on to insist, in a manner so characteristic of intellectuals influenced by the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, that the true explanation for our dislike of Becher's eulogy resides in the fact that "the language of poetry refuses its services to anyone who uses it to immortalize the names of those exercising power. The reason for this refusal lies in poetry itself, not outside it."

Facets of this approach, of course, are admirable, most notably the rejection of the crude and hitherto prevalent Marxist search for the political value of a work of art in its "objective" portrait of society (Lukács), its overt celebration of the Party, etc. (Zhdanov), or its author's attitude toward the Berlin Wall or the Great Wall of Mao. Like Mayakovsky, Tretyakov, Breton, and Brecht before him, Enzensberger is both Marxist and modernist. Unfortunately, so great is the pressure within the Continental Left never to let one's pants drop and be caught floundering, bare-buttocked and erect, in the bourgeois whorehouse of personal taste, that Enzensberger feels constrained to counter Lukács, etc. with an "objectivity" no less rigorous than their own.

Now I admire Enzensberger's talents (he is also a gifted linguist), and I salute that part of him, a most considerable part, that penetrates the rhetoric and postures of his fellow-rebels, laying bare the democratic sham of the Cuban Communist Party as clear-sightedly as he earlier exposed the democratic sham of Germany's great coalition. He is a writer who is not afraid to be found alone, even at the cost of being ostracized by all the clans and cliques who support their identities with the flying buttresses of the hour. I have nevertheless found his essays, which span a wide variety of subjects, from the meaning of treason to the "media industry," the avant-garde, and political ecology, difficult to enjoy. They lack warmth, vitality, and contact with everyday life, even though such qualities are recognized by Enzensberger in passages he quotes by other authors such as Jan Myrdal and Susan Sontag.

Part of the trouble, I suspect, lies in his periodic capitulation to the very habits of mind he rightly distrusts. The monster manipulating the machine keeps reappearing even when Enzensberger is at pains to stress that the monster *is* the machine; and while valuably pointing out that the Left would do well to scrutinize the manipulation of the media manifest in every actual social system, Cuba no less than the United States, he is irresistibly drawn by the soft chocolates of anticapitalist reductionism: "the ruling class," "the revolution," and, of course, "the system." How seriously should one take a commentator who declares the problem of violence and illegality to be, simply, superfluous for those "who make the revolution,"

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even though as he points out himself, all known revolutionaries have carried the poisons they wish to eject from the social bloodstream? Why superfluous? Because, says Enzensberger, opponents of the system must "operate at the limits of legality and constantly transgress the limits in both directions." Sounds very dialectical but what does it mean? Not much more, I suspect, than his charming *aperçu:* "Short-term hopes are futile. Long-term resignation is suicidal."

Yet Hans Magnus Enzensberger's values and commitments are ones that, broadly, I too would endorse. I suppose, then, that my irritation with him has in it an element of fratricide, and of guilt too. I know how easily one can begin an essay, as he does, by knocking Orwell's pessimism as "undialectical," how stylishly one can conclude it with a flourish, as he does, about deepening contradictions. I know, too, how impossibly difficult it is to write an essay half as true to life as any one of Orwell's.

DAVID CAUTE

TAKING THE LANGUAGE OUT FOR A WALK

SELF-PORTRAIT IN A CONVEX MIRROR. By John Ashbery. Viking Press. $5.95.

When Frost conceived his famous description of the poem's goal as "a momentary stay against confusion," I'm sure he never imagined it would be invoked to describe the work of a poet so different in habit and mind as John Ashbery, a poet usually associated with Stevens, the man who in Frost's opinion wrote about "bric-a-brac." But the proof is there, throughout Ashbery's work, but never more clearly and movingly than in his latest book, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror.* "City Morning" from that book should help show what I mean:

NOTE: It is not our policy to review books by writers associated with the magazine, but this review was accepted before the appointment of John Ashbery as our poetry editor.

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A veil of haze protects this
Long-ago afternoon forgotten by everybody
In this photograph, most of them now
Sucked screaming through old age and death.

If one could seize America
Or at least a fine forgetfulness
That seeps into our outline
Defining our volumes with a stain
That is fleeting too

But commemorates
Because it does define, after all:
Gray garlands, that threesome
Waiting for the light to change,
Air lifting the hair of one
Upside down in the reflecting pool.

What's Frostian here is the stay of both poem and photograph against the confusion of time and death, a positive made from a negative, a diminished thing turned to some account against Frost's background of "hugeness and confusion shading away from where we stand into black and utter chaos." Ashbery doesn't allow himself that diction, of course, because he's writing a good while later, but his feeling for the "background" is much the same.

So too is his sense of the poem as a performance, except that he manages his performances quite differently from Frost's. In "City Morning" we follow the leisured, gentle, gently qualifying voice as it conducts us on a tour of surprises, starting with our discovery that we are located "In this photograph," an image both in and out of time. After the shock of "Sucked screaming," muted because the action is past like the scene, a skein of syntax begins to unwind, luring us into the apparent nonsense of the next seven lines. These lines seem obscure because the syntax is convoluted, and the curious use of language ("seize America," "a fine forgetfulness," etc.) momentarily distracts us from the whole. Sense seems to elude us as we focus our moment to moment attention, but we never doubt there is a meaning because we recognize the ligatures of meaning, the syntactic signposts. The effect is like that of the opening lines of "Spring Day" from *The Double Dream of Spring:*

The immense hope, and forbearance
Trailing out of night, to sidewalks of the day
Like air breathed into a paper city, exhaled
As night returns bringing doubts

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That swarm around the sleeper's head
But are fended off with clubs and knives, so that morning
Installs again in cold hope
The air that was yesterday, is what you are

In so many phases the head slips from the hand.

Very much a "performance," these lines buoy us between phrase and image in a motion resembling the compositional gestures of a Frankenthaler painting until, arriving at the predicate, syntax tells us we are home. Our tour is a guided one; we can relax and enjoy the scenery, secure that we'll arrive at our destination, wherever it might be, however different from our expectations.

In "City Afternoon" it's that cluster of beautiful images in the closing lines: those

Gray garlands, that threesome
Waiting for the light to change
Air lifting the hair of one
Upside down in the reflecting pool

Our pleasure here derives from the superb handling of the line and even more from the pleasant discombobulation of having our vision twice reversed in the final line, first with "Upside down" and then with "the reflecting pool," whereby the images in the photograph keep being rearranged, our perspective repeatedly shifted as in our expeience of life itself.

Frank O'Hara once described his poems as "I do this, I do that" poems, Ashbery's poems are "I am this. I am that" poems. Most poems are a crystalization of experience: we move from a reading of the poem to a rethinking of the poem on some deeper level. Ashbery's poems move on their deepest level, the level of the experience out of which they are made. Thus, we get a lot of high dudgeon from some of Ashbery's critics, since in a sense there's nothing to talk about after reading an Ashbery poem —nothing, that is, to explicate. But thus also one of the great excitements of Ashbery's work—our sense of participating in a voyage of discovery as we momentarily inhabit the poet's journeying awareness.

We take a more expansive journey in "Voyage in the Blue," a poem that refers us back to "Definition of Blue" in *The Double Dream of Spring*. In that earlier poem, the poet constructed a fictive "Blue," an essential metaphor, "a medium/In which it is possible to recognize oneself." But the effort to achieve self-recognition in the upper regions of the imagination failed: resulting

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In a downward motion, or rather a floating one
In which the blue surroundings drift slowly up and past you
To realize themselves some day, while, you,
    in this nether world that could not be better
Waken each morning to the exact value of what you did and said, which remains.

In "Voyage in the Blue" the extemporized metaphor holds long enough for us to enter, and the "downward motion" is happily reversed as we find ourselves "growing, rising . . . /Into an admixture of deep blue enamelled sky and bristly gold stars."

The impulse for this fanciful excursion, as for virtually all Ashbery's poems, is love—"You and I and the dog/Are here, this is what matters for now"—in this case a love so powerful that "the results are unfathomable, as though/A single implication could sway the whole world on its stem." Besides the speaker's condition, this image gives us Ashbery's poetic, the way his imagery and syntax and voice function— "always something fading out or just coming into focus" as each poem sways to and fro on the currents of the perceptions it supports. The fathomable results of such powerful love, greater than the brief satisfactions of *The Double Dream of Spring* and characteristic of Ashbery's new book as a whole, are a new clarity and power of perception: "this Morning in the orchards under an unclouded sky,/ This painful freshness of each thing being exactly itself." The new metaphor continues to hold ("When will you realize that your dreams have eternal life" asked the speaker of *Three Poems*), and as the speaker pursues this clarity "deep into the midst of things," there is a momentary agitation as some

Fool comes shouting into the forest at nightfall

News of some thing we know and care little of,
As the distant castle rejoices to the joyous
Sound of hooves, releasing rooks straight up into the
    faultless air
And meanwhile weighs its shadow ever heavier on
    the mirroring
Surface of the river, surrounding the little boat
    with three figures in it.

Through a remarkable maneuver of transportation we are moved from forest to castle, from outside to inside, but also from inside to outside as we conclude the poem watching ourselves recede in the sheltered distance. On an arpeggio of diminishing sound our guide simply vanishes from the enchanted scene he has contrived, and we are left with the reflection of his mind, more real than the voice which conveyed it. The rejoicing castle, our destina-

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tion, takes on the tone of the entire "Voyage," becoming substantial as it "weighs its shadow ever heavier on the mirroring/Surface of the river." The river's surface tells us the castle—itself a metaphor, a "mere" dream—is finally real.

Mirroring surfaces, reflecting pools, photographs, movies, mirrors—surfaces which show us ourselves—are a hallmark of Ashbery's poetry, his "continual pilgrimage" in search of "what you are." The best of his restless voyages in this new book, the most reflective and self-reflecting, is the title poem. It opens with a description of the images and gestures registered in Parmigianino's own attempt at self-discovery:

> As Parmigianino did it, the right hand
> Bigger than the head, thrust at the viewer
> And swerving easily away, as though to protect
> What it advertises. A few leaded panes, old beams,
> Fur, pleated muslin, a coral ring run together
> In a movement supporting the face, which swims
> Toward and away like the hand
> Except that it is in repose. It is what is
> Sequestered.

Ashbery's speaker tracks "what is sequestered" through the filiations and shuttlings of his registering mind. In one sense the poem is a celebration of that inquisitive mind at the center of Ashbery's universe, the mind in search of the clues to its experience:

> Long ago
> The strewn evidence meant something
> The small accidents and pleasures
> Of the day as it moved gracelessly on.
> A housewife doing chores. Impossible now
> To restore those properties in the silver blur that is
> The record of what you accomplished by sitting down
> "With great art to copy all that you saw in the glass"
> So as to perfect and rule out the extraneous
> Forever.

Since the "extraneous" gives life its special texture of life, however (doing that here through a quotation from Sydney Freedberg's biography of Parmigianino); then from the speaker's constantly shifting perspective Parmigianino's accomplishment is also "his/Life-obstructing task":

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What should be the vacuum of a dream
Becomes continually replete as the source of dreams
Is being tapped so that this one dream
May wax, flourish like a cabbage rose,
Defying sumptuary laws, leaving us
To awake and try to begin living in what
Has now become a slum.

As we follow the speaker on his meandering pilgrimage in search of an art which can never satisfy, a self which can never be defined, the haunting image of the cinquecento painter repeatedly drifts into his consciousness, holding the dissolving form of the poem in its "recurring wave of arrival," collapsing the centuries, ushering past into present: an exterior reflection of the operations of memory whereby we *can* discover the form and value of our experience, some of it anyway. But the consolidations are fleeting, themselves trapped in the continuum of experience of which the poem is only a fragment. The more the speaker discourses with his mirrored self, the more he comes to resign himself to his "man-sized quotient," what Ashbery in an earlier poem calls "This state of being that is not so big after all."

We have seen the city; it is the gibbous
Mirrored eve of an insect. All things happen
On its balcony and are resumed within,
But the action is the cold, syrupy flow
Of a pageant. One feels too confined,
Sifting the April sunlight for clues,
In the mere stillness of the ease of its
Parameter. The hand holds no chalk
And each part of the whole falls off
And cannot know it knew, except
Here and there, in cold pockets
Of remembrance, whispers out of time.

As the poem winds to its final pause through the clearest expression of Ashbery's obsession, we understand that we cannot even have the consolations of a conclusion, for we cannot have life whole. But the chastened speaker's fret in the midst of his resignation is our glad guarantee that the impossible pilgrimage will resume.

Until it does we would do well to consider the territory gained. Aside from an occasional cuteness (in "Tenth Symphony" and "Ode to Bill") and an occasionally impenetrable privacy of vision (mostly in the shorter poems), *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* is Ashbery's best book—more full of the

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sounds and colors and textures of life, more aswarm with the quick quiddity of it all, the whole refined in perception "in a focus sharpening toward death" as we move from "Worsening Situation" through "Foreboding" and "Fear of Death" to those final, muted "whispers out of time" of the closing lines. The book demonstrates better than his previous work Ashbery's ability to maneuver the richest and most contemporary diction in our poetry—mock Milton to Sid Caesar, dumb trade to Heidegger—as the Möbian strip of his mind carries us forward on the many levels of all our experience: the historical, the banal, the erotic, the sublime, the personal, the bathetic, the spiritual, and the scientific—worthy of special note since our poetry cannot remain vital unless it finds a way to include our science. *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* is finally Ashbery's most accessible book and the one that should win him the larger audience he deserves. There's no denying he is a difficult poet, as are all original poets, but his generous, fresh, dazzling book, like the night of his opening poem, "gives more than it takes."

ALAN HELMS

BREAKING OUT

THE ADVENTURER: THE FATE OF ADVENTURE IN THE WESTERN WORLD. By Paul Zweig. Basic Books. $8.95.

One way of understanding people who write about literature is to divide them into two groups. The first is oriented toward method, concerned about rigor and self-consistency, with a tendency toward the graceless, the abstract, and the stylistically joyless, attentive to the life cycle of critical schools, at the moment still fascinated by the French, hoping to derive a model by means of which a played-out formalism can be supplanted by new methods, whether revised Freud, revised Marx, or revised Lévi-Strauss. The second is uninterested in methodological consistency, eclectic and broadly derivative, as bored by the question of whether the new criticism is dead as by the question of whether structuralism is live, stylish, agile, inter-

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ested in making a criticism that stands as the richest possible transcript of one's private transaction with the primary literature. Paul Zweig's *The Adventurer* is an example of the latter, so fluid and pragmatic in its approaches to the problem of the transmutation of the adventurer through the Western imagination that it would confound the person who begins it looking for Zweig's method; but so persuasive, so alive, and so immensely intelligent that it transcends its function as a book about literature and becomes a meditation on experience at large, on the energy and fatigue of styles, on the power and perversity of the great models of the imagination, of the very *vita activa* itself.

If the word "adventurer" sounds loose and woolly to the ear, it is not so in Zweig's argument, where it is defined and demonstrated with great precision. The adventurer leads a heightened life, full of courage, strength, cunning, and resourcefulness. But unlike his polar opposite the "hero," he is not loyal and selfless:

> Adventurers are self-derived, self-determined. Therefore they walk on delicate ground; an abyss opens at their feet. Why do they court dangers and isolation? For no reason. For themselves. To "live dangerously" is for them an act of self-indulgence, not of loyalty. The applause they receive will be charged with distrust, and with a secret longing to witness their downfall. From the viewpoint of the common good, these men are worthless. Apparently that is why we are thrilled by their acts. They stand outside the categories of duty and obligation. They give us the spectacle of the self-determined man who defends not us, but himself. His inner destiny is his law. He reclaims for man an area of the forbidden ground.

Odysseus is Zweig's first and best example. Every example after Homer, as Zweig acknowledges, is diminished or qualified in some way: Beowulf, Sir Gawain, Casanova, the dominant figures of Gothic romance, Conrad's Kurtz, T.E. Lawrence. The fact that every adventurer after Odysseus is less than a fully realized type, rather than undermining the concept, allows Zweig an extraordinary leverage in dealing with figures such as Robinson Crusoe, who is a kind of antiadventurer, a figure in an exotic setting, called upon for courage and cunning, who responds with labor, reason, and survival. After reminding us of the centrality of the adventurers in most other times and cultures, and after tracing his mutations and decline from Odysseus to the present, Zweig asks again, as he asks at the beginning, how it is that we, who continue to value individuality, have come both to devalue the adventurer and to cast his image in marginal and subliterary forms. It is, of course, not the first time that a cultural phenomenon has been seen most clearly at the point of its obsolescence.

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The result of Zweig's asking the questions he does, in the way he does, is, for one thing, an especially rich range of reference, in which he moves from the classic to the "interesting" to the popular and manifestly inferior, from works of remote antiquity to works of the immediate past to experience itself as it registers on the imagination of the mass mind. I grope for ways to suggest this richness of reference, finally raiding his index: Ariosto and Eric Ambler, Diderot and John Dillinger, Dionysius and Doc Savage, Kant and Kipling, Monk Lewis and Malraux, Mme. de Pompadour and Dr. Pangloss, Sancho Panza and Oswald Spengler. For another thing, Zweig's structure imposes unconventional questions on the works he treats. A consequence, for example, is a chapter on the Gothic that bypasses all the weary generalities on the subject, considering it instead in its relation to the imagination of adventure, the result being an audacious, ingenious chapter, the single most stimulating piece of writing in existence, I think, on the early Gothic romances. And for another thing, Zweig's structure allows him to take seriously some rich but anomalous works such as Casanova's *Life*, a confession that is so brilliant and full yet so lacking in the introspective and the problematic that it ordinarily frustrates our ability to discuss it well, because it seems to deny our sense of what a confession ought to do.

At several points Zweig moves beyond the analysis of his exemplary texts, taking large risks. The most unexpected and impressive of these speculations is a sustained passage on the mystique, or phenomenology, or myth of storytelling, with its peculiar power, its ability to transport and depersonalize an audience, the union of the adventurer as adventurer and the adventurer as teller, the relation between telling and the demonic or shamanistic. A chapter on Nietzsche seems to me the least satisfying of Zweig's speculative interludes, since he must explain Nietzsche, apologize for his rhetorical excesses, contend with his detractors, and finally strain to connect Nietzsche's critique of the modern world with the literature of adventure. Zweig's last chapter is the riskiest of all because it is there that he attempts to take the fate of adventure up to the very present, not only to analyze works but to dilate on the very quality of modern experience. Here the contours of Zweig's argument are largely persuasive: the movement inward toward an adventure of sensibility in such figures as Conrad and T.E. Lawrence, the disintegration of action in Sartre, the discovery of an occult inner space into which the storyteller may voyage and return, as in Hesse and Michaux. But it is all done too quickly. Once he is finished with T.E. Lawrence, except for some extended commentary on Sartre, the twentieth century is sketched in lightly. A whole shelf of modern works comes to mind, in fact, that would have a bearing on the nature of adventure in the twentieth century—some late D.H. Lawrence, much of Hemingway, Mann's *Felix Krull,* for classic

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examples; for recent work some of Wright Morris, the fiction of Peter Matthiessen, Dickey's *Deliverance*. If Mailer is Zweig's choice as the emblematic adventurer of our time, he might just as easily have chosen Bellow's Henderson instead, or, better yet, both.

I have spoken of Zweig taking risks, as if he himself were an adventurer. He has, to some extent, become his subject, I think. Any book that moves from *Gilgamesh* to Mailer can be faulted, not merely in its last chapter but throughout, if it is incontrovertibility one is looking for. It can also be admired for the audacity of its risk-taking. Instead of incontrovertibility, what Zweig provides is a style that is ingratiating, often lyrical, always intensely interesting, the sense of mind pressing, with great brilliance and without much prudence and reserve, against the limits of its subject, an argument, in short, that exhibits the daring, cunning, and resourcefulness that defines its subject.

PHILIP STEVICK

Mankind in Barbary
The Individual and Society in the Novels of Norman Mailer
by Stanley T. Gutman

A "skillful and insightful addition to Mailer criticism . . . Gutman's incisive, finely worked analysis . . . finds three difficulties in Mailer's current literary attitude: the limitations of his Romantic concern with the self, the impossibility of keeping up with the rapid pace of cultural change, and the actual lack of change in Mailer himself. Yet he sees in Mailer a sensitivity and insight, combined with 'splendid prose and a sense of verbal mood and balance.' . . . recommended for the serious student and Mailer scholar."—*Library Journal*
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WRITERS' CHOICE

RONALD CHRIST: I've been looking over three books published in 1974. Three subversive books I take it, because while they are well known, no experts I know in their respective fields will tell me that they are good books—charging them instead with superficiality, inhumanity or heresy. Having never finished any of the three because each time I pick one up I'm impelled to reconsider some portion of what I've already read, I recommend them for their faults.

Robert Scholes's wonderfully superficial introduction to *Structuralism In Literature* (Yale) makes a different kind of "rich noise" from the one he finds in Barthes, and it does what few introductions have the grace to do: introduce us to known and not-so-known texts, explaining away nothing and leaving us to carry on our own conversation. "Any book such as this one, which is to some extent about other books that are about still other books" and still never loses its focus on those intermediary books, never sinks beneath the surface and drowns in a tangle of footnotes and point-chopping is a rarity.

Among those intermediary books, I would put Christian Metz's *A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Oxford). Even though Scholes makes no mention of Metz that I recall, he does say that "For a student of the film these days to be ignorant of semiology is to be simply illiterate." While that simple illiteracy is often to be preferred to the complex illiteracy found among the semiologists, Metz's book is surely indispensable to any one who cares about either language or film. A hard book: if Byron were looking for a subject to break his brain on today, I'd suggest structuralism, not Arabic. Metz offers all the pleasures and pains of the structuralists. The pleasures: excitement, yes, at the discoveries and the fantastic reasonableness of the system; the pains: weariness with the new vocabulary describing the old reality, revulsion at the almost mechanical (read "inhuman"?) rationality. Though cursed by a gentle colleague for having praised this "unreadable, $11.00 book," I still experience the same excitement at a new approach to the subject when I dawdle in Metz that I once felt turning the pages of Percy Lubbock's *Craft Of Fiction.*

Because of course there is no such thing as "unreadability." You have to read the thing to discover that it is "unreadable" and that's where Richard Lanham's *Style: An Anti-textbook* (Yale) comes in. A below-the-belt attack on the teaching (and therefore on

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the practice) of writing (and reading) starting from the title with its cap-and-gown colon, the book advocates such qualities as "The Uses of Obscurity" and "The Delights of Jargon". (About the former he asks: "To what degree . . . does the style realize itself as opaque . . . a style to be looked *at* rather than *through*?") Quoting Sviatisalv Richter hollering at the second flute player at Covent Garden, Lanham presents a hands-down victory for the kind of effective communication that would ordinarily be labelled "unclear," "incoherent": "Your damned nonsense can I stand twice or once, but sometimes always, my God, never." Thoroughly grounded in the study of classical rhetoric—he is the author of *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (University of California)—Lanham has an encouraging appreciation for obscurity, opaqueness, and everything else that is anathema to the teachers of nice, tidy elements of style. Elements that even when successfully taught at best result in a verbal equivalent of Palmer handwriting.

Three cheers, then, for superficiality, inhumanity and obscurity. And the time to enjoy them.

DONALD MARSHALL: I'm not a fan of science fiction, but I recommend Stanislaw Lem, a Polish cybernetician and futurologist. His book *Solaris* is a strange and fascinating exploration of memory and reality, a story about events on a space station hovering over a bizarre ocean that covers a distant planet; it's been made into a remarkable Russian movie. His *Invincible* (published by Seabury) exhibits the emotional range of man's dedication to science and exploration, a range from curiosity to courage to a thirst for vengeance; the story is about an expedition to discover what catastrophe (or enemy) destroyed the men of an earlier expedition. Lem's talent is for the sensitive and sensuously precise rendering of the mind's struggle to understand an unimaginably alien reality. His spacemen remain men; their equipment finally matters less than the emotions, imaginings, ideas, commitments they can muster. *Cyberiad* (also Seabury) is quite different, short pieces in classic fairy-tale, moral-fable form, though with machines and their constructors as heroes and with feats of engineering and computer science as their plots. The poetry writing machine and the machine that can create anything that begins with the letter "n" are curious inspirations wonderfully conducted. Michael Kandel's translation of Lem's verbal pyrotechnics deserves high praise; the tales provoke thought and laughter in equal and ample measure.

It's harder to respond to *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered*

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My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother . . ., ed. Michel Foucault, trans. Frank Jellinek (Pantheon). The book reprints the documents and reports in a case from 1835 of a young French farmer, who wrote a memoir of his crime at the instruction of the court. His mother and father were embroiled in ceaseless domestic quarrels, and Rivière finally killed his mother to relieve his father of his troubles. Several medical experts intervened after the trial and successfully petitioned the King to commute Rivière's death sentence on grounds of insanity. The case shows a struggle between medical and legal institutions over the power to classify the event, to apply a "discourse" to it as Foucault would say. Is the event a punishable "crime of parricide" or a nonpunishable "insane act"? Following the memoir and legal reports come several essays by Foucault and his students, which sketch the social and historical context as well as contemporary legal and medical ideas. Most of these are not very interesting, and several deploy an inhumanly abstract rhetoric upon these terrible events. Foucault's essay situates Rivière's narrative among the ballads, broadsheets, and other quasi-journalistic "discourse" in the period which reported, about equally, shocking crimes and great historical deeds. The book is likely to be used and misused to support a variety of contradictory positions. Some may see little point in contemplating this particular horror; it certainly provokes more thoughts than Foucault and his colleagues can deal with. But there may be reasons not to look away, to try instead to understand.

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